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ABSTRACT

This report discusses strategies to increase the retention rate of students in the following Special Programs sponsored by the City University of New York: (1) Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge (SEEK); (2) the College Discovery Program (CD); and (3) the College Discovery and Development Program (CDDP). Section 1 covers strategies used for high school level students. Section 2 describes strategies used for entering freshmen. Section 3 covers the following special curricula: (1) English as a Second Language; and (2) MAPES (Minority Assistance Program in Engineering and Science). Section 4 presents research approaches to studying retention strategies. Section 5 discusses counseling workshops and practices for the following student groups: (1) single parents; (2) families and significant others; (3) black males; (4) study groups; and (5) high school and college counselors. Section 6 is comprised of responses from Special Programs students. Notes on contributors are included. A copy of an Educational Development Plan is appended, along with 71 references. (JS)

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RETENTION STRATEGIES

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Perspectives From Special Programs

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Spring 1986 New York, New York Vol. 4, No. 1

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RETENTION STRATEGIES

Perspectives From Special Programs

Spring 1986 *New York, New York* *Vol. 4, No. 1*

"...As we know, a great deal of psychological research tells us that success in school and the commitment to stay in school are highly correlated with good feeling about oneself, with the ability to set realistic expectations, and with a history of success experience. We must believe these findings and bring them to bear in structuring the learning environment for our young people."

President Bernard Harleston
City College of New York

"...I think I would have gone to college somehow, but I'm not sure I would have been able to survive without the support services SEEK provided."

Henry Arce
SEEK Alumnus

"...I am now in my third year at CSI and as of June 1985, will have accumulated 69 credits and have maintained a G.P.A. of 4.0. Recently I was awarded the Belle Zeller scholarship for the academic year 1985-86...I realize now that I might not have remained in college if I had not had the support of a program like SEEK."

Catherine Bottaro
SEEK Student
College of Staten Island

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PREFACE

Increasing the retention rate of Special Programs students is the concern of this issue of Linkages. Each author addresses, from his or her own perspective, a two-part question: What strategies to increase retention are being used in Special Programs and are those strategies working? Further questions unfold from the authors' responses to this question. For example, what roles in the retention of students are played by: financial aid (or the lack of it); being in a study group; being a single parent; having, or not having, a mentor; knowing in high school or earlier what will be expected in college? Also, what is the relationship to retention of: social and cultural attitudes that go unexamined; having access to a day-care center; being isolated from the group? These are only a small sample of the kinds of concerns elicited by the answers to the central question in this issue: are we -- and how are we -- increasing the retention of special programs students?

Most of the authors in this issue are involved with a special program as either faculty member, administrator, counselor, researcher or student. By Special Programs at the City University of New York we mean the SEEK Program (Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge) in the CUNY senior colleges; the College Discovery Program (CD) in the CUNY community colleges, and the College Discovery and Development Program (CDDP) in the CUNY/Board of Education High School centers at five New York City high schools. A special program outside CUNY is represented by the Special Admissions/Educational Opportunity Program at the State University of New York, New Paltz campus.

Many of the authors note in their own programs findings referred to by the CUNY Task Force on Retention and Academic Achievement which reported to Chancellor Joseph Murphy in 1984. Among the major findings were: 1) On the whole, high school grade point average correlates with success in college; 2) Success in the first remedial courses taken correlates with later academic success in college; repetition of the same remedial course correlates with lack of success; 3) English-as-a-Second Language is increasingly becoming a major element of the University's offerings; 4) Summer courses, workshops and other programs aimed at entering students needing remedial work promote the retention and academic success of participants.

The importance of preparing high school students for college and of high school/college articulation efforts is explored in the articles by Dr. Roberta Vogel of Staten Island College and Dr. Ron Ellis of Lehman College. Dr. Vogel points out the value of developmental over crisis-oriented counseling and offers an Educational Development Plan addressing many of the academic, psychological and career concerns faced by high school students. Dr. Ellis describes how a joint effort by high school and college faculty (the CDDP consortium project, the Summer Math and Science Institutes) have made effective mentoring possible.

Reducing the number of semesters students spend in remedial work is one of the major goals of the City College SEEK MAPES program (Minority Assistance Program in Engineering and Science). Dr. Millicent Roth of MAPES explains how the program works, and how it develops student potential for achieving in engineering and science. Dr. Randolf Tobias of Queens College outlines some of the remedial strategies for increasing retention among entering freshmen. From the SUNY campus at New Paltz, Thomas Morales, who was once a special programs student himself, proposes seven strategies for successful retention programs.

Dr. Barton Solomon outlines the steps of his Freshman Orientation Program at Staten Island College. The recruitment of Lehman SEEK of significant others to be role models and mentors in a college/community effort is described by Lehman's Dr. Joe Jackson. Ina Richards and Dr. James Pope of York College focus on study groups as strategies for retaining students on academic probation. Angela Sales of CUNY Special Programs Central Office examines the notion of persistence, and suggests a counseling model to increase persistence among high risk students. Ms. Sales uses her own experience as a distance runner as an analogy.

The problems of the student who is also a single parent and of the Black male student are examined, respectively, by Avis Hendrickson and Dr. Flora Miller of John Jay College. Ms. Hendrickson reports on the activities of the Single Parents Workshop at John Jay SEEK; Dr. Miller examines the historical and social setting for high attrition among Black males and recommends counseling strategies to keep Black male students in high school and college.

Dr. Clara Velasquez reports on the major steps taken by Hostos College since 1978 to increase the enrollment and retention of its mostly ESL student body, and details the special curriculum efforts and services offered by Hostos.

A somewhat different angle, the important part research can play in increasing retention, is offered by Dr. Norma Tan of Baruch College and Dr. Richard Fox of Kingsborough Community College. Dr. Tan calls for a collaborative effort between Special Programs researchers and practitioners, maintaining that such an effort can improve program effectiveness. Dr. Fox stresses the need for theoretical models for longitudinal studies on student retention, and shares the notions of major researchers on student persistence/

withdrawal. He also proposes how such a research study might be designed.

The effectiveness of the SEEK Prefreshman Summer Programs (initiated in 1979) in giving students a headstart is reported by Laraine Bengis of the CUNY Special Programs Office. Ms. Bengis notes the high rate of retention of the summer program students, their acceleration from remedial to college level work, and the benefits to faculty and researchers of summer programs.

The reactions of Special Programs students themselves round out this issue of Linkages. Carol Sims of the CUNY Professional Staff Congress shares her interviews with four SEEK graduates, now in careers in administrative medicine, law, public service and counseling. In a separate article, current SEEK student Catherine Bottaro of the College of Staten Island, a Belle Zeller scholar, tells us how SEEK helped her succeed in college after her twenty-year interim at home raising a family. In particular, she cites the efforts of her counselor and the SEEK Freshman Orientation Program as helping her move from fear to success.

Helping students make that same journey is the business of Special Programs. We are grateful to the authors for sharing with others the efforts in their particular schools.

It is our hope they have stimulated a network for further exchange and discussion.

Eleanor Pontes

University Dean for Student
Affairs and Special Programs

EDITOR'S NOTE

The authors of this issue of Linkages deserve special thanks for their hard work and willingness to engage in the give-and-take that goes into putting together a publication. The production of this issue of Linkages was a long undertaking, and the authors are to be commended for their patience.

In their articles they go beyond the statistics and share with us practical strategies they are using at their schools to retain students. They also share visions of strategies they would like to see put into practice. Some of these visions support the current thinking nationally and internationally on retaining nontraditional students, especially in the first year of college.

We hope we will be hearing more from them.

Judith Burke

RETENTION STRATEGIES: PERSPECTIVES FROM SPECIAL PROGRAMS

A LITTLE EXTRA HELP

The Personal Touch Can Mean More Than We Realize[1]

Ronald S. Ellis
Lehman College

Programs for minority and disadvantaged students can help them to choose careers in science, but sometimes special admissions assistance and course offerings aren't enough. At the City University of New York, we discovered that we could increase the effectiveness of one of our summer programs for underachieving minority high school students with just a small addition -- a little bit of individual attention.

Odysseus entrusted the care of his child Telemachus to the loyal Mentor, who didn't betray his friend's trust. Since then, Mentor's name has come to mean a loyal adviser, teacher, or coach. In the spirit of the first Mentor, the staff of our Summer Mathematics and Science Institute[2] (SMSI) builds special relationships with visiting high school students during a 5-week-long summer program.

---

[1] "A Little Extra Help" is reprinted by kind permission of The Science Teacher, May 1985, Washington, D.C.

[2] The Summer Mathematics and Science Institutes are one of seven educational interventions developed since 1981 by the College Discovery and Development Program/Urban Project staff. The CDDP/Urban Project was partially supported by a Ford Foundation Planning Grant. Details concerning the SMSI and other

In SMSI we teach computer science, language arts, mathematics,and science. Students observe, measure, and collect data using trigonometry, engineering techniques, and other scientific skills. On a given day they might measure the temperature of the city air, determine the acid content of soil, or test the quality of local water sources. Community resources such as the New York Aquarium, the Coney Island beach, the Brookhaven National Laboratory, The American Museum of Natural History, and Central Park become classrooms. In addition, students develop research project proposals. They then complete the research project during the following academic year.

In addition to teaching science, we coach students in how to study more effectively. In regular counseling sessions we stress the variety of career possibilities in science and math. The mentor program seemed the perfect way to reinforce our counseling sessions.

Looking for Help

SMSI's faculty convene every Friday during its run, when students have no classes. During one of those Friday sessions,

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project activities can be obtained by contacting: CDDP Urban Project, The City University of New York, 555 West 57th Street, New York, New York 10019.

the faculty members hit on the idea of mentor sessions as a way to give additional support to the high school students -- support aimed at helping them toward careers in science.

Each teacher in the program takes responsibility for three or four students assigned at random. After lunch every day, the small groups get together in some comfortable corner of the cafeteria or under a tree somewhere on campus. The mentor offers guidance and support, helping students develop ideas for their research proposals, checking up on them when they miss a day of classes, and generally encouraging them to greater involvement in the program and to careers in science. The small groups discuss lectures, laboratories, career options and the requirements for those careers, and possibilities for financial aid. Mentors record observations and comments on students daily, keeping progress records on their charges.

When we initiated the mentor system, we dictated no special instructions for running the groups, but as we have refined the project, we have introduced more structure based on a four-phase model. The early program called for 15-minute mentor sessions, but evaluations have shown that we should allot more time than that. In addition, while students appreciated what they had learned from the faculty mentors, the high schoolers did not interact much with each other. Students can benefit greatly from discussions among themselves in such a program; we want to strengthen that aspect of the groups.

In addition to the direct advantages of students developing close relationships with adults in science careers, this new aspect of the SMSI program gave us a convenient way to evaluate the effectiveness of the entire program. The mentors could ask about specifics of the program and could modify the program far more efficiently as a result of their students' comments. In addition to recommending longer mentoring sessions, students surveyed after last year's SMSI program wanted to keep in touch with their mentors through the following school year.

You can modify this system to meet the needs of minorities, disadvantaged groups, and women in your secondary school. A little bit of individual attention and encouragement can mean the difference between a student going to college and not going, or can help a student decide to major in science. Take a page from Odysseus' book -- be a Mentor.

Reference

Gray, W.A. Mentor-assisted Enrichment Projects for the Gifted and Talented. Educational Leadership, 40, 16-21.

HIGH SCHOOL GROUP GUIDANCE
FOR
EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT:
A MODEL FOR INCREASING RETENTION

Roberta Vogel
College of Staten Island
SEEK

During the high school years, the role of the high school counselor is a very important one because of the impact that counseling can have on the lives of students at that level. High school students are entering a phase of their lives where many emotional, physical and social changes are taking place and where such changes are occurring so rapidly that assistance in dealing with the developmental upheaval is often indicated. Developmental counseling is an ongoing process which can take place at any point in a person's life and may occur throughout the person's life span. The emphasis in such counseling is on helping students achieve positive personal growth regardless of the stage of development in which they find themselves. In high school, the counselor doing developmental work with students helps them to be able to achieve positive adjustment to the demands of the society.

Instead of being crisis-oriented, developmental counseling is more preventive in nature. The counselor tries to help the student achieve self-understanding and greater awareness and appreciation of his or her potential as a developing person.

Self-acceptance is fostered as well as the ability to make greater use of capabilities. Counselors help students develop their capabilities to the greatest extent possible. One aspect of such development is the acceptance of more responsibility for one's behavior and actions, and for the decisions and choices which must be made regarding one's life.

Advantages of Group Guidance

Group guidance is a very useful vehicle for developmental counseling. Methods can include several kinds of group work, such as sessions to orient students to high school and inform them of teachers' expectations. The high school may also choose to develop guidance units and courses as a regular part of the curriculum. Other sessions of group guidance might include career days as part of career guidance and career planning and development; college days arranged for those students who plan to attend college and who are exploring various options; and field trips to acquaint students with various vocations, job settings and the world of work. Films, guest speakers and workshops are all methods which can be used effectively to promote good group guidance for high school students. Group methods tend to be effective since change and acceptance of change can be facilitated through group interaction and feedback, the exploration of feelings, and group support and positive reinforcement.

Some of the major areas of concentration in a comprehensive high school group guidance program might include such things as orientation to high school, goal-setting and decision-making, career exploration, educational planning and personal/social/educational and academic problem-solving. Other areas might deal with preparation and financial planning. Such information is most effectively imparted to students through a group guidance program, although use can be made of individual counseling, information giving and referrals as well. The advantages of group guidance include the following:

a. The possibility of students receiving feedback from peers.

b. The opportunity for students to gain and share knowledge and awareness of various options in their lives.

c. The opportunity for better self-understanding through the group process.

d. The chance to explore the personal relevance of career options through the group interaction.

e. The opportunity to make and evaluate decisions.

f. The chance to put plans into action and to evaluate the consequences.

g. The opportunity to assess and receive feedback regarding the suitability of decisions.

Basically, the various aspects of a group guidance counseling program serve the purpose of providing a small group structure through which the essentials of counseling can be achieved. Such a structure enables counselors to reach more students and provides students with specific information which they need to have. At the same time it offers a forum for discussion of mutual problems and solutions to problems. All this can be done in a systematic way as part of the high school curriculum.

Following is a brief outline of suggested topics which might be included as part of high school group guidance. Other topics may be added to those suggested here. However, the areas below seem to be of major importance for inclusion in a program of guidance which may be extended over the period of three to four years that a student is in high school.

1. Orientation to High School

Students should be oriented as a means of helping them to adjust to becoming high school students. Some of the relevant orientation topics include student expectations and the reality of high school life, student responsibilities in high school life, and the role of the principal, teacher and counselor.

2. Goal-Setting and Decision-Making

Students need to be assisted in beginning the process of setting goals for themselves and making their own decisions regarding their educational and career plans. In order to do this, they should be helped to know themselves better, through sessions dealing with values clarification, and the decision-making process at various levels including college choice, career choice and life planning.

3. Dealing with Personal/Social, Academic and Educational Problems in High School and College

Topics here might include the following:

a. Development of general survival skills. Students need help in making the best use of all the high school and college resources. Of value are sessions dealing with effective study habits; budgeting time; making use of counselors, tutors, library resources; the importance of classroom attendance and earning high grades.

b. Cognitive skills development. This section might include such topics as developing listening and note-taking skills, dealing with classroom and test anxiety, and dealing with problems of classroom assertiveness or participation.

c. Personal/social problems. Of importance are such topics as developing self-awareness, dealing with peer pressures, family relationships, financial problems, and personal development and interpersonal relations.

d. Academic and educational problems. Students need assistance in analyzing their educational strengths and weaknesses, dealing with skills weaknesses in content areas, developing study skills and strategies for success, and effecting attitude change regarding school and the learning process.

4. Academic and Curriculum Planning

Counselors should assist students in the development of an educational plan extending over a period of three to four years. Such a plan would take into account a student's assessment or achievement scores as one step in setting the foundation for academic preparation for college. Courses must be selected which will satisfy requirements for college entrance. Where needed, plans should be made for students to receive remediation and/or tutoring in communication skills, foreign languages, mathematics and/or science.

5. Career Exploration, Planning and Decision-Making

Career areas may be explored through the use of films, books, tapes, the Occupational Outlook Handbook, outside speakers or field trips. Additionally, vocational and career awareness tests may be used to assess career knowledge and vocational interest. Students should be required to research at least three career areas of their interest as part of this unit of the program. High school and college curricula and academic preparation should be discussed in terms of their relationship to basic requirements in various career fields.

6. Preparation for College Testing Programs

PSAT and SAT preparation may be done through actual classroom work and/or through the use of review books and materials. A program of home study may be planned to occur over the two summers preceding the administering of the exams: PSAT home study the summer before the tenth year; SAT home study the summer before the eleventh year, and SAT home study the summer before the twelfth year.

7. Resume Writing

Students should learn what a resume is and the importance of having one. They would be required to prepare a resume of their own as part of the requirements for completing this unit of the course.

8. The World of Work

Students should be taught the important aspects of looking for, obtaining, and keeping a job. As part of this unit, they would learn about dress codes for the work place, including good grooming and good decorum. They may be given the opportunity to meet professionals in the field and to understand the commitments involved in various career choices. They could learn about how to deal with job responsibilities, such as the importance of attendance and promptness, and how to deal with employer expectations.

9. College Orientation

Students should become familiar with and learn how to use such college materials as admissions forms, brochures, catalogues, and financial aid applications. They should be helped to understand the whole financial aid process and how to go about applying for various kinds of aid. They should also be informed about the process of applying for college and how and when to see a college counselor or to seek help when needed. Much of this will require that high school counselors keep informed about application procedures of the colleges to which students apply. This is especially true in the case of City University, where many New York City high school students apply.

10. Financial Planning for College Attendance

Whether a student plans to attend a public or a private institution, he or she will need to receive assistance in planning how to finance a college education. Several sources of income may be available to students: jobs, scholarships, grants, work/study programs, co-operative work programs and loans. Additionally, students often need assistance in successful budgeting of finances for college.

The above areas can be included as part of a group guidance program for students as they prepare to go immediately into the job market, to college, technical or business schools. Plans which are developed with and for students should be put in writing and should become part of their tentative Educational Development Plan, a model illustrated in the following pages.

The Educational Development Plan of the College Discovery and Development Program

In spring semester, 1981, four units of The City University of New York took part in a Bridge Program for students from the College Discovery and Development Programs (CDDP) in the five CDDP New York City high school centers. Both high school and college counselors made suggestions for topics to be included in a tentative group guidance program and an educational development plan for high school students. (The four CUNY schools then included Baruch, City College, LaGuardia Community College and Medgar Evers College.)[1]

Many of the suggestions were incorporated into a group guidance curriculum and an "Educational Development Plan", described in the following pages. The guidance program can be structured over a three to four year period, where, in each year, the emphasis might be on a different aspect of the student's development, depending on the relevance of the topic to the issues being dealt with.

---

[1] Currently the Educational Development Plan designed for CDDP students is being utilized by the CDDP/Urban Project staff in five Precollege Institutes on five CUNY campuses: three senior college campuses (Hunter, Lehman and College of Staten Island) and two community college campuses (Borough of Manhattan and Queensborough). An external evaluation team will examine the results of the Educational Development Plan implementation over the course of the next academic year, 1986-7.

The Educational Development Plan serves as a tool to assist students in immediate and long-range planning for their educational and career goals. It must take into account the needs and interests of students relevant to career goals. Since career goals may still be vague and unclear for many students, the educational plan will be a tentative one, developed in consultation with the counselor and used by the students as a guide as they go through high school and prepare for the world of work or for entrance into college or technical school. The plan helps students remain aware of the various steps they need to take before they can make informed educational and career choices.

Used in conjunction with group and individual guidance, an educational development plan can give students the added assistance they need to make realistic educational and career plans so they may compete successfully in today's society. It may also be instrumental in their making a decision to stay in, rather than drop out of, high school.

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AN EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

AN EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

To the student: the Educational Development Plan is a tentative plan used in consultation with your counselor. It is to be a guide as you progress through school. The plan will help you be cognizant of the various steps you must take before you can make informed educational and career choices.

General Information

Name ____________ Grade ____________

Social Security #____________ Homeroom teacher____________

Type of diploma you wish to obtain:

________Regular ________Merit ________Regents

Class Schedule: Indicate whether course is a Regents course (R) or Non-Regents (NR).

____

____

____

____

____

Counselor's name____________________

Room No ____________________

Telephone ____________________

My expectations in high school:

Academic/Educational____________________

____

____

____

Personal ____________________

____

____

____

Social____________________

____

____

____

Needs Assessment and Testing of Skills

Indicate test results where applicable:

PSEN

Math________

Reading________

Regents Examinations

English________

Social Studies________

Math________

Science________

Foreign Language________

Business Education________

Art________

Industrial Art________

Music________

Other________

Regent's Competency Tests (RCT)

Math________ Writing________

Reading________

Citywide Examinations

English________

Social Studies________

Math________

Science________

Foreign Language________

Business Education________

Art________

Industrial Art________

Music________

Other________

Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)

Verbal________ Math________

Test of Standard Written English________

Other Exams:____________________

____

____

List five major problems:

____

____

____

____

____

How would you summarize your chief problems in your own words? ______

____

____

____

Self Improvement Factors

What are some of the obstacles that I have to overcome to do well in high school?

1.

2.

3.

What are some of the weak areas in my school work?

1.

2.

3.

What are the strong areas in my school work?

1.

2.

3.

What are some of the academic/educational problems that I must overcome (e.g., academic skills problems, fear of test taking, fear of math)?

1.

2.

3.

Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes (SSHA) [Your scores on the SSHA scale can indicate your strengths and weaknesses in the area measured by the survey, and also help to predict future academic achievement.]

Beginning of the 9th, 10th, 11th year: (Circle grade level)

	Delay Avoidance DA	Work Methods WM	Study Habits SH	Teacher Approval TA	Education Acceptance EA	Study Attitudes SA	Study Orientation SO
Raw Score							

End of the 9th, 10th, 11th year: (Circle grade level)

	Delay Avoidance DA	Work Methods WM	Study Habits SH	Teacher Approval TA	Education Acceptance EA	Study Attitudes SA	Study Orientation SO
Raw Score							

Major Problems identified through SSHA ____________________

____

____

____

____

Recommendations agreed to by the Counselor and Student ____________________

____

____

____

____

Mooney Problem Check List

[This assessment tool will provide you with a well-rounded picture of your academic/educational, personal, social, and/or financial problems. Indicate your scores in the boxes below:

HPD	FLE	SRA	SPR	PPR	CSM	HF	MR	ACW	FVE	CTP	TOT.

My plans for overcoming these problems

a. I have talked with my counselor regarding my problems

Yes__________ No__________

b. Plans we have made to help me overcome my academic/educational and general study problems:

1.

2.

3.

c. Plans we have made to help me overcome my personal/social problems:

1.

2.

3.

Academic and Curriculum Planning

Type of Diploma you are pursuing____________________

Number of credits you will need to graduate______________

Number of credits you have accumulated______________

PROGRAM OF STUDY

9th Grade Schedule

Courses	Teacher	Midterm Grade	Final Grade

Areas of Difficulty and Recommendations for change

____

____

____

____

10th Grade Schedule

Courses	Teacher	Midterm Grade	Final Grade

Areas of Difficulty and Recommendations for change

____

____

____

____

____

11th Grade Schedule

Courses	Teacher	Midterm Grade	Final Grade

Areas of Difficulty and Recommendations for change

12th Grade Schedule

Courses	Teacher	Midterm Grade	Final Grade

Areas of Difficulty and Recommendations for change

Career Planning/Forecasting

Strong Campbell Interest Inventory

General Occupational Themes

REALISTIC (RG) INVESTIGATIVE (IN) ARTISTIC SOCIAL (AS)
CONVENTIONAL (CO) ENTERPRISING (EN)

I.Basic Interest Scales

(a) Very High				
(b) High				
(c) Average				

II.Occupational Scales

(a) Realistic - Very Similar				
Similar				
(b) Investigative - Very Similar				
Similar				
(c) Artistic - Very Similar				
Similar				
(d) Social - Very Similar				
(e) Enterprising - Very Similar				
(f) Conventional - Very Similar				
Similar				

III.Career Areas and Majors to be explored

1.
2.
3.

College offering a major in Career Choice 1:

1.
2.
3.

Training and other qualifications (e.g., amount of time, number of years, kind of degree):

Colleges offering a major in Career Choice 2:

1.
2.
3.

Training and other qualifications (e.g., amount of time, number of years, kind of degree):

College offering a major in Career Choice 3:

1.
2.
3.

Training and other qualifications (e.g., amount of time, number of years, kind of degree):

21

Other Vocational Survey Results; e.g., Values Clarification, Vocational Interest Inventory.

Goal Setting

How attending college can change my life:

General goals I have for myself (e.g. kind of education, kind of work):

How attending college can help me achieve my aspirations:

How completing high school can change my life:

Financial Aid Planning

What kind of finances do I need in order to attend college?
a. name of the college (1st choice):
amount/year:
b. name of the college (2nd choice):
amount/year:
c. name of the college (3rd choice):
amount/year

Some Sources of Income
a.
b.
c.
d.
e.

Some jobs I can do to earn money
a
b
c
d
e

Lists of scholarships I can apply for:
a.
b.
c.
d.
e.

Some grants I can apply for:
a.
b.
c.
d.
e.

Fundamentals of budgeting - Some important points:
a.
b.
c.
d.
e.

Resume Preparation

A resume is a categorical listing of your activities and work experiences to date. Your school placement office may use a standard data sheet or "Personal Data Sheet" which you will be asked to fill in so that it may be used as a resume. **Should you decide to work before entering college consult your counselor on writing a good resume and preparing for job interviews.**

Work Experiences (i.e. Summer employment, part time work, volunteer work)

Year (From-To)	**Experience**
____________	________________________
	________________________
	________________________
____________	________________________
	________________________
	________________________
____________	________________________
	________________________
	________________________

Personal Data

Born__________ Height__________ Marital Status__________

Health__________ Weight__________ Social Security No.__________

Driver's License #______________________________

Activities (e.g., student memberships, clubs, hobbies, interests)

____

____

____

____

____

Special certificates and awards

____

____

____

____

Three References (list only those people who will respond favorably about you and your capabilities).

Name **Address**

1) ______________________________

2) ______________________________

3) ______________________________

Notes

1984 SEEK PREFRESHMAN SUMMER PROGRAM
EVALUATION REPORT
(Including a Comparison of Results Over Five Years)[1]

Laraine Bengis
CUNY Office of Special Programs

Preface

The SEEK Prefreshman Summer Program (PFSP), after five consecutive years of operation, has gained a reputation for excellence as a basic skills program for academically underprepared and poverty background students and as an innovative educational community within CUNY. For the more than three thousand prefreshman students who have participated in the Program, it has provided a "headstart" in a summer environment tailored to their needs. For the dedicated administrators, counselors, instructors and tutors, many of whom return summer after summer, it offers a vital opportunity to explore and exchange ideas in a mutually respectful and enlivened community. Students are impressed by the summer faculty's availability and interest in their growth. Faculty, in turn, comment on the high quality of participation by students.

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[1] Copies of the full 1984 SEEK Prefreshman Summer Program Evaluation Report are available through a request in writing to the Office of Special Programs, 555 W. 57 St., City University of New York, Suite 1512, NY, NY 10019.

While we can point to our successes by citing the large numbers of students who complete the Program every year, strengthen their basic skills in reading, writing and math and enroll in City University in the fall, we know that the Program has less readily measurable advantages -- such as students increasing their self-esteem and confidence as learners, or the camaraderie that develops between people linked by common struggles and goals or simply the knowledge that someone cares. It is likely that the summer program also makes a difference in subsequent academic performance and in whether a student drops out or graduates. These and other issues are being addressed by CUNY's Office of Special Programs in a follow-up study of SEEK "summer" and "no-summer" entering students. Already, preliminary findings (See Hofmann, 1983) show that the Program has a positive effect on grade point averages and retention after a year.

Perhaps one of the most important and gratifying outcomes of the Program to date is the expansion of prefreshman summer offerings in 1985 to include a separate SEEK ESL Program for 100 incoming students with limited English-language proficiency. With almost one-third of SEEK students in need of ESL services and the tightening of CUNY's academic requirements for all students, the ESl Prefreshman Program has a vital role to play.

Equally gratifying is the knowledge that SEEK's summer program has served as a prototype for a similar program the University hopes to launch for non-SEEK entering students in need of remediation. It is through cooperative efforts and endeavors such as this one that students who come to CUNY handicapped with deficient high school preparation and from poverty backgrounds will have enhanced opportunities to see their dreams of graduating from college become a reality.

Background

Of all the students who enter the City University, SEEK students labor under the greatest academic and economic handicaps (See Lavin, Protash, Kramer and Bhouraskar, 1983). Indeed, most of them are the first members of their families to attempt a college education. Too often, they understand little of the hurdles they will have to overcome to reach their goal of attaining a college diploma.

SEEK, through its Prefreshman Summer Program (PFSP), attempts to bridge the gap between students' high school experiences and the realities of college. The Program (voluntary, but open to all who meet its entrance requirements) provides six weeks of intensive basic skills instruction, tutoring and counseling to incoming students who fail to achieve proficiency on the

CUNY skills assessment tests in reading, writing and mathematics. In essence, it is a supportive community that sets out to provide an experience in which students will strengthen both themselves and their basic skills prior to matriculating in the fall.

Within a more intimate and closely monitored structure than is possible during the regular academic year, each of the ten campuses designs a Program to accomplish three common goals which have remained the same over the years: (1) improving the basic skills of prefreshmen who must meet University-wide standards of competency on the skills assessment tests by the time they are ready to enter the upper divisions of CUNY; (2) reducing the amount of time students spend in remedial courses; and (3) easing the transition from high school or the work place to college.

This past summer, all the programs provided group orientation, individual counseling and tutoring which were integrated to varying degrees with the instructional content. Variation among programs depends on students' needs, successful strategies utilized during the regular academic year, and experimentation with innovative techniques. Several programs utilized an interdisciplinary instructional approach in reading and writing, with overlapping concepts, themes and skills instruction. At these campuses instructors from different skills areas coordinated their efforts, planned jointly and shared effective strategies. Other programs adhered to a more traditional approach.

One program expanded its basic skills offerings to include an "Introduction to the Physical Sciences" course for students who hope to go into the sciences or engineering.

An Educational Community for Faculty

The Program has also evolved into an educational community for the many administrators, counselors, instructors and tutors who return to it summer after summer. Because the college environment is smaller and more intimate in the summer, it provides faculty with a needed opportunity to explore innovative techniques, exchange ideas and, in general, to develop further as educators. At summer planning workshops held in the spring, faculty are given an opportunity to share effective strategies with other Special Programs staff.

A Framework for Research and Evaluation

The PFSP also provides a framework for ongoing research and evaluation. Since 1980, the Central Office has uniformly collected retention and academic performance data documenting the advances made by students in the Program. In addition, the 1984-1985 SEEK budget provided, for the first time, funds to each of the ten summer programs for "testing, retesting and evaluation". This provision has allowed colleges to expand their evaluation efforts and, where needed, secure the services of personnel trained to conduct evaluations.

The concern now in the development of the PFSP is its long-term effect on student retention and academic achievement. The Office of Special Programs is conducting a longitudinal comparison study of students who attended the PFSP with those who entered in the fall, on such traditional measures as: GPA's; ratio of credits earned to credits attempted; and number of semesters in attendance. The study is also investigating these questions: Does the PFSP reduce the number of remedial and developmental credit hours needed for students to enter the academic mainstream? Does academic progress during the summer term continue during the following semester? Does the level of high school preparation significantly affect progress during the summer and the following semester? Are there differences in the effectiveness of the reading, mathematics and writing aspects of the summer program?

It is anticipated that an understanding of the short and long-term effects of the PFSP will enable SEEK to assist an even greater number of entering students in the improvement of their basic skills prior to matriculation in the fall.

Summary of Findings

The findings below represent the most salient highlights from the 1984 evaluation. Where appropriate, comparisons are made between current and past findings.

THE PFSP RETAINS MOST OF ITS PARTICIPANTS.

- The 1984 high rate of retention (94 percent) corroborates past results for four years indicating that students who make the commitment to attend the PFSP complete it. The retention rate has been consistently over 90 percent.

PREFRESHMEN WHO COMPLETE THE PROGRAM CONTINUE THEIR ENROLLMENT AND MATRICULATE AT THE CITY UNIVERSITY IN THE FALL SEMESTER.

- Over 96 percent of the PFSP completers registered in fall 1984 as SEEK students. The mean fall enrollment for the past five years has been 93 percent.
- An analysis of SEEK fall enrollment patterns for the past five years reveals that the 93 percent rate of enrollment for PFSP completers compares favorably to the 57 percent rate for all SEEK allocants.

THE PFSP ACCELERATES THE MOVEMENT OF MANY ENTRY-LEVEL STUDENTS FROM REMEDIAL TO COLLEGE-LEVEL COURSE WORK.

- In reading, almost half of the students advanced to higher level courses or were exempt from further remediation in the fall. These findings are consistent with past ones.

- Course advancement rates are consistently lowest in writing, with less than one-third having advanced in 1984.

- Course advancement rates are consistently highest in math, with over 60 percent having advanced in 1984.

STUDENTS INCREASE THEIR SCORES SUBSTANTIALLY ON THE CUNY POST - SKILLS ASSESSMENT TESTS. MANY PASS THE POST-TESTS.

- In reading, the percentage increase in mean score from pre-to post-test was 23 percent, from a pre-score mean of 8.8 to a post-score mean of 10.8. (The University-wide minimal passing score is 12 of a possible 25 points). Twenty-three percent of the students who had failed to meet University-wide standards for proficiency in reading prior to summer school, did so on the post-test. Results have remained relatively stable over the years, fluctuating only slightly.

- Each summer, the least dramatic gains are made on the CUNY post-writing test. This may be due, in part, to the fact that writing is an integration of separate skills and requires students to synthesize many elements into an intelligible whole. This past summer, the percentage increase in mean score from pre-to post-test was 11 percent, with a mean pre-score of 5.2 and a mean post-score of 5.8. (A score of 8 is needed to pass). Eighteen percent of the students passed the post-test. Since 1981, there has been a steady decrease in pre-to post-test gains and in the post-test pass rate, despite a small but steady increase in pre-scores. This warrants further exploration.

- Math gains remain the most substantial year after year. In 1984, almost half of the students passed the post-test. Students showed a 38 percent increase from the pre-to post-test score, with a mean pre-of 24.3 and a post of 38.1.

t-tests performed on the difference between mean pre- and post-test scores in reading, writing and math showed that the differences in each case were statistically significant beyond the .0001 level.

Conclusion

The Prefreshman Summer Program has firmly established itself as a supportive and effective environment for numerous students who enter the University. Most of the summer students complete the program and, when compared to non-PFSP allocants, register in City University in the fall in significantly greater numbers. They strengthen their basic skills considerably in reading, writing and math. Consistent with prior years, progress in 1984 was greatest in math and least in writing. Reading and math pre- and post-test results have remained relatively stable over the years. A downward trend is noted in writing where post-test gains and pass rates have decreased steadily since 1981.

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INVOLVING STUDENTS IN THE OWNERSHIP OF THEIR EDUCATION

Thomas D. Morales
State University of New York
New Paltz
Special Admissions Program

My own experience as a financially and academically disadvantaged student has given me valuable insight into my position as the Director of a Special Admissions Education Opportunity Program at an upstate residential college.

As a product of the New York City School system, (the James Monroe High School College Bound Program), I, too, experienced the traumatic feelings of arriving by bus, baggage in hand, to begin my college career. I had just left my "comfortable" neighborhood in the South Bronx where going to college was not expected but applauded. Now I was entering a new world, a predominantly white campus, where I would be living among students from very different social, economic, and educational backgrounds. Most of them were better prepared than I for the academic and social adjustment confronting new college students. I remember very clearly the reality of facing this new world as someone whose high school grades were far below those expected of the regularly admitted student. Would I be able to succeed academically and adjust to my new surroundings? Would I be accepted by new and very different peers? Fifteen years after I first arrived on the campus I now refer to as my alma mater, I find myself the chief administrator of a program designed to admit academically and financially disadvantaged students to a traditional public college. It is my responsibility to see they are provided with academic support, counseling, financial assistance and anything they might need to assure they persist in college and graduate.

My experience as a Director has shown me that disadvantaged students can succeed in college when the total college experience is geared toward involving them in the ownership of their education. Such efforts must be supported by the president of the college on down -- including faculty, counselors, academic and student services administrators, and of course, the students themselves. This retention effort includes several strategies.

1. Retention begins with recruitment. Admissions policies should realistically assess the basic skills needed by students for them to be successful at a given school. Some educators believe the single most important factor in retention is the appropriate match between the student and institution. This match takes into consideration not only the academic, but also the cultural, social and ethnic backgrounds of students. It is important for an institution to determine if it has developed the academic and non-academic support services that will be necessary to give students a full opportunity to succeed. The issue is to

objectively and honestly ascertain whether the institution has done so.

2. Orientation programs should be designed to assist entering students in dealing with academic and social demands of the institution. Such programs should be available throughout the year and seek to reach passive students who tend to shy away from group activities. Orientation activities should address the concerns of social adjustment, study skills attainment and the development of a positive relationship with the institution. The year-long orientation should be a team effort among faculty, administration, counselors, academic advisers and academic support specialists to assist students with problems as they arise during the year.

At New Paltz, we employ a multi-faceted freshman orientation program focusing on study skills attainment and adjusting to being a member of both the Special Admissions program and the larger college community. For three days during the summer, students meet with counselors and peer orientation advisers to become familiar with the academic and support services of the program and of the regular campus. Students are tested in writing, reading, math and a foreign language and later review test results with their counselors in an academic and advising session.

In September, the entire EOP freshman class and staff come together to "kick off" the academic year. Services available to EOP students are restated, and students are encouraged to participate in academic and student development activities. Each new student is assigned a counselor who also serves as an adviser for those who have not yet declared a major. (New students are discouraged from selecting a major until their second or third year.) Trained peer counselors, academically successful upper classmen, are assigned to help students adjust socially and academically. They serve as mentors for students and as links to the counseling staff. They undergo training and meet in regular sessions with the peer counseling coordinator. They also meet with other professional staff working with the students to whom they have been assigned.

3. Academic advising is essential to a successful retention program. It provides assistance to students by helping them select appropriate courses based on career objectives, goals and academic preparation. It assists students in values clarification, in monitoring their academic policies, procedures and requirements, and in developing linkages between course selection and career objectives. The adviser should involve the student in the coordination of his or her total education experience. As Anderson (1978) points out, when students chart their own educational progress, student and adviser can work together in analyzing strategies to yield as much as possible from educational

options. This approach will inevitably enhance student involvement in the advising program.

4. New students should be introduced to the importance of career counseling. Career counseling sessions help students formulate a context within which they can select classes and identify issues to be raised with the academic adviser. At New Paltz, we use Holland's self-directed search materials in small group sessions (one to ten counselor/student ratio). During the academic year, each student is also introduced to "Discover," a computer-based career guidance system. "Discover" assists the student in self-assessment, career research and exploration and choosing or changing a major. In addition, it assists the student in discovering his or her own career-related interests, skills and values. "Discover" enhances the ability of the student to investigate occupations and to gain experience in the career decision-making process.

5. Academic support services should be included as part of a year-long orientation program. At the EOP program at New Paltz, a proactive, rather than reactive, approach to academic support services is encouraged. Students take a study skills tutorial, College Learning Techniques, a 45-hour course. Topics include time management, developing note-taking skills, taking tests, using the library and expanding vocabulary and reading skills. Class size is kept small, (one to fifteen student/teacher ratio), to encourage student involvement.

Review sessions are offered in several of the regular subject matter courses. In a team effort, academic support specialists (high school teachers) and graduate students work closely with the professor who is teaching the course in developing the review sessions. The material the professor has covered each week is reviewed. Cooperation from each academic department also helps support this articulation effort between the EOP program, regular SUNY faculty, graduate students and the high school academic specialists. Review sessions are also offered for a Writing course by means of a Writer's Workshop Laboratory. All the review sessions of regular courses use a ten to fifteen student/teacher ratio to encourage interaction among students, faculty and academic support specialists.

6. Strong, academically-oriented minority students organizations are essential to helping improve academic performance and increasing retention and graduation rates of student members. Such organizations can apply peer pressure to student members who are neglecting their academic responsibilities. They can send a message that ties in satisfactory grades with membership in the organization. All bona-fide students organizations can play a role in helping to increase retention and improve academic performance of students, but academically oriented organizations can be especially effective.

7. Retention programs must closely monitor students' academic progress and adjustment to campus life. The mid-term evaluation provides an opportunity for the faculty to prescribe

such remedies as tutoring, increased lab time or the need to attend classes regularly and on time. It also lets students be directly involved in the assessment process early enough to redirect efforts to improve their academic performance.

Furthermore, mid-term evaluations promote faculty/student interaction, a factor considered by many educators to be more strongly related to satisfaction with college than any other type of involvement. Students who interact frequently with faculty members, as Astin points out, are more likely than not students who are also satisfied with all aspects of their college experience including student friendships, course offerings, intellectual environment and even the administration of the college. Activities encouraging faculty/student interaction can have a positive effect on retention. We must reach those students who are experiencing academic and social difficulties. It is our responsibility to provide support services and activities as much as possible in consideration of the student's schedule. This is particularly true at institutions that serve commuter students.

Conclusion

In this paper I have attempted to show how involving students in the ownership of their education is being put into practice for EOP students at the SUNY New Paltz Special Admissions Program. An increasing number of educators believe involving students is both the key to increasing retention and providing for educational excellence. I will close with an excerpt from a report in the September 1984 issue of the Chronicle of Higher Education endorsing this belief and making several recommendations, among them the following:

a. College administrators should reallocate faculty and other institutional resources toward increasing services to first and second-year undergraduates.

b. Faculty should make greater use of active modes of teaching and require students to take greater responsibility for learning.

c. Learning technologies should be designed to increase, not reduce, the amount of intellectual contact between students and faculty.

As Astin (1984) has pointed out, all institutional policies and practices -- those relating to non-academic as well as academic matters -- can be evaluated in terms of the degree to which they increase or reduce student involvement.

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PERSPECTIVES IN COUNSELING: STUDENT RETENTION AND THE FRESHMAN ORIENTATION EXPERIENCE

Barton Solomon
College of Staten Island
SEEK

Julie T. dropped out of high school in the spring of 1980. Her family being poor, she felt a personal responsibility to help support her three brothers and two sisters. She began working as a cashier in a neighborhood supermarket. Julie liked her new job and enjoyed working with people, conversing with customers as they filtered through the check-out counter. She even began to enjoy the idiosyncrasies of the patrons, watching them with amusement as they went through their weekly shopping rituals. Julie began to feel a potential that she had not been aware of, and she decided to apply for a position as a senior cashier. This being her first promotion, it would offer her more responsibility and a slightly better wage. However, Julie knew that a high school diploma or a General Equivalency Diploma (GED) would be a prerequisite for the higher position, and she did not have one.

In the months ahead Julie spent most of her spare time learning facts she had casually overlooked when she was in high school. Working toward her equivalency diploma was difficult, but she was determined to do it. And she did. Approximately one year later she passed the examination, and although she did not participate in her high school graduation ceremony or attend the prom, she felt very proud. She confidently applied for a position as a senior cashier but was rejected. She was devastated and approached her manager for an explanation. He told her that he believed she was not yet ready for such an "advanced" position. Julie was angry now, and for the first time she began to take herself seriously. She knew in her heart that she was qualified, and her indignation was the seed that grew into the idea of a college education.

As summer neared its end, Julie had mixed emotions about her first semester in college. How would she cope with the coursework? How would she manage financially and still help out at home?` Would she be as smart as the other students she would be meeting? These were but a few of the questions that weighed upon her as the fall semester approached. During registration, Julie and her counselor explored the various possibilities for her first semester's work. Based on her initial interview, her interest, and a battery of test scores, a program was devised that appeared to be relevant to both personal needs and educational goals. Her program included remedial reading, mathematics, accounting, physical education, introduction to acting, and freshman orientation.

"Freshman orientation?" asked Julie, "What's that? What do I need it for?" Her counselor explained that previous experience had shown students who had enrolled in and completed the freshman orientation course had a better "college survival" rate than students who had not taken the course. In fact, the first semester of college was the most crucial one. He emphasized that all students were strongly encouraged to take freshman orientation due to a serious problem of attrition in the University -- a problem common to many colleges. Freshman orientation was an important tactic, he said, in trying to avert failure in the freshman year. It was, essentially, the University's way of bringing counselor and college together to work toward retaining students in good standing.

Julie agreed to take the course. She found it invaluable.

The Freshman Orientation Program at CSI/SEEK

The freshman orientation process in the SEEK Program at the College of Staten Island (CSI) is not an easy one to explain. It is not a typical academic class, nor is it a conventional counseling contract. Its primary purpose is to help incoming freshman develop the skills necessary for academic success. The orientation's emphasis is placed on promoting group processes, self-awareness, and learning as a cooperative venture. It provides information relative to the college setting by offering a systematic vehicle for the transmission of vital college data. In addition, it provides students with interpersonal contacts, fostering counselor/student and student/student relationships in an attempt to assuage - if not eliminate - the alienation and isolation typical of the freshman year.

A primary goal linking all freshman orientation programs is the student's development of responsibility for his or her personal and professional/educational career. The following is a typical example of how counselor and student at CSI/SEEK work toward this goal.

Each week students meet in groups with their counselor, who is functioning in the role of counselor/teacher. In a non-judgmental climate students are encouraged to address the issues they feel most affect their daily lives on campus. These discussions are followed by small group meetings and individual sessions. Students are also requested to attend weekly seminars and workshops which help address issues relating to academic performance. An outline of a typical semester's workshop schedule includes:

I. Time Management and Goal Setting

II. Study Skills, Note-taking, Writing Term Papers

III. Understanding Curriculum and Course Requirements; Learning to Use the College Catalog

IV. Retention standards; Understanding the GPA

V. Group Attitudes and Values; Adjusting to College

VI. Registration Techniques for Optimal Scheduling

VII. Coping with Stress; Learning Can Be Fun

VIII. Organizing for Student Action; Breaking the "Apathy Myth"

IX. Utilizing an "Educational Development Plan"

X. Using the Library

XI. Financial Aid Planning

XII. Career Planning Workshop

All workshop topics are carefully planned to address the student's academic needs and requests.

Freshman orientation is the ongoing dialogue between student and university that enables the student to learn how to cope with the problems of college adjustment. Through group meetings, individual sessions and workshops, the student begins to realize that education in the urban environment does not have to be a depersonalized experience, but rather that "learning the ropes" with a group of other students can facilitate one's own transition and maximize success. In an objective and non-threatening atmosphere, students learn that regardless of the severity of a problem, a solution can be worked out in an unbiased manner. Moreover, meeting with a counselor in ongoing groups (in addition to the traditional one-on-one sessions) enhances the opportunity for counselors to meet student needs and to pass along important information. College freshman in particular appear to be more receptive within a peer group, where honest feedback and a "give-and-take" exchange can develop. In essence, by moving the counselor into the freshman orientation classroom, there is a greater opportunity for affective learning to take place. Eventually, this translates into the acquisition of concrete academic skills that enable the student to compete in the academic arena. By linking affective and cognitive factors, the counselor is actually utilizing time and process to develop thinking and communication skills.

Faculty participation in the freshman orientation process allows the counselor to be a part of the experience, observing human dynamics as they unfold each week. Thus, counselor and student are able to develop an alliance that will help the student deal with the bureaucracy and avoid the traditional student/counselor "game-playing" that can only serve to alienate the freshman. Being in the unique role of freshman orientation counselor, one can make learning easier for students and create an empathetic environment for students.

In summary, the freshman orientation process at CSI/SEEK does the following:

a. Passes on vital information to the student in a manner which encourages it to be heard;

b. Builds trust between student and counselor, and student and the university, thereby maintaining student enrollment. Student retention is crucial to a thriving university, and freshmen orientation serves this goal.

By helping students get started in college, assisting them with pages of forms, brochures, applications and catalogs, the freshmen orientation process enables the student to get on with the intellectual and social challenges at hand.

Recently a former CSI/SEEK freshmen orientation student approached this writer to discuss her career objectives. Her experience working with handicapped people had led her to consider a career in this field. What this writer found most fascinating was the transformation that had taken place in her. A frightened, incoming freshman who had been out of high school for "too many" years she was now a confident, successful student, having overcome the "treacherous waters" of the freshman tide in which she thought she might "drown". At this writing she is completing her studies with a 4.0 index. In addition, she is the recipient of the coveted Belle Zeller Scholarship Award for Academic Excellence. Obviously, an exceptional student.

Her initial enrollment in college, however, found her facing the problems and anxieties common to all students.

When asked how she had managed to deal with and overcome her difficulties so successfully, she quickly pointed to her freshman orientation class. For her, it had been the catalyst enabling her to overcome the fears that had kept her away from college. The ongoing contact with her counselor in the context of the freshmen orientation format had enabled her to make choices and educational decisions freely and without intimidation.

This outstanding student summed up the orientation program's goals most succinctly when she said, "Quite honestly, if it weren't for that freshmen orientation class, I wouldn't be where I am today."

ENTERING FRESHMEN AND THE REMEDIAL EXPERIENCE: SOME CONSIDERATIONS FOR INCREASING RETENTION

Randolf Tobias
Queens College
SEEK

Practically every college and university across the nation has some sort of remedial program for entering freshmen. Even a few law schools are now demanding that their entering classes take basic courses in writing and reasoning. This demand is due to a recognition that many public schools have failed to provide students with adequate skills for college. Faculty and administrators of colleges and professional schools recognize that they have to re-examine their assumptions about the performance level of entering students.

This growth of poor academic performance among entering college students points to a parallel growth in attrition. Nationally, attrition rates are about 40% for entering freshmen, although rates vary from institution to institution. Data for the Queens College SEEK program suggest that the highest attrition occurs during the freshman and lower sophomore years.

This paper will discuss two remedial strategies of the Queens SEEK program which are designed to increase the retention of entering freshmen. These strategies are: (1) the Queens SEEK

Prefreshman Summer Program and (2) basic support services for SEEK freshmen.

The Queens SEEK Prefreshmen Summer Program

Since 1979, SEEK programs throughout CUNY have successfully conducted prefreshman summer programs. These programs have offered students pre-and-post-testing, counseling, instruction, tutoring and financial aid. The programs have run for six weeks. The goals of the Queens SEEK prefreshman summer program have been:

a. To develop students' proficiency in basic arithmetic, reading, and writing skills.

b. To begin a process whereby incoming freshmen will eventually make the transitional adjustment from high school to college.

c. To present career information in such a way that incoming freshmen can see and understand the relationship between academic and career skills.

Students are selected for the prefreshman summer program based on performances on the CUNY skills assessment tests in writing, reading and mathematics. If they score below the cutoff scores or show skills deficiencies in a particular area of the examinations, they are selected to participate in the summer program.

Evaluating the Queens SEEK Prefreshman Summer Program

The process of evaluating the effectiveness of the SEEK summer program at Queens College over the past five years, was both formative and summative. Formative evaluations were carried out through site visits from staff of CUNY's Central Office of Special Programs.

They revealed the following:

a. Instructors appeared to be organized and sensitive to the needs of students.

b. Teaching methods were such that students understood and responded well.

c. Instructors were competent in their subject matter.

Summative evaluations were carried out in two ways: (1) by providing the Research and Evaluation Unit of the Office of Special Programs with pertinent data at the conclusion of the program, and (2) by engaging an independent consultant to evaluate the extent to which stated goals were met.

By means of a pre-designed instrument, the Research and Evaluation Unit collected data on pre-and-post-assessment scores, passing scores, and course completion. The independent evaluator examined program organization, student eligibility and the quality of program implementation. Some significant conclusions drawn by the Research and Evaluation Unit have been:

a. At the conclusion of the 1980 summer program, 90% of those students who completed the program advanced to a higher level course at the beginning of the fall 1980 semester.

b. Students who completed the 1981 summer program demonstrated the largest score increase (57.1%) on the CUNY post-writing skills assessment tests.

c. Students demonstrated a 38.0% score increase on the post-CUNY skills assessment tests, during the summer of 1982.

Some significant conclusions drawn by the independent evaluator have been:

a. In the areas of reading, writing and mathematics, students advanced 17%, 16% and 43% respectively on the CUNY post- skills test (summer 1984).

b. In the summer of 1983, percentage gains were 14.3% for writing and 45.8% for mathematics.

c. Students of non-ESL writing increased mean score by 11%, while students of ESL writing increased their post-test mean by 21.5% (summer 1984).

Prefreshman summer programs appear to be one viable strategy for retaining entering freshmen with academic skills deficiencies. Three points about the program stand out:

a. Significant numbers of prefreshmen who completed the summer program progressed to a higher level of instruction each fall semester.

b. Each year, prefreshmen who completed the summer program increased their scores substantially on the CUNY post-skills assessment tests.

c. Each year, significant numbers of students who completed the program passed one or more of the CUNY post-skills assessment tests.

Support Services at Queens/SEEK

Support services offered SEEK freshmen are another vital retention strategy. It goes without saying that a strong package of instruction, counseling, tutoring and financial aid during the freshman year are essential to insure retention. Professionals in academic skills are sophisticated about these strategies. Although models of instructional and support services differ from institution to institution, research on retention indicates certain components are essential to any retention model. These are:

a. A Skills Program Committee on Scholastic Standing buttressed by a computerized retrieval system.

b. English-as-a-Second Language strategies.

c. Computer-assisted instruction within basic skills.

d. Career education strategies.

An early-alert system which identifies students in danger of academic failure (Goodrich, 1980) should be able to outline avenues of assistance ranging from tutorial services to academic advising and personal counseling. The early-alert approach can be realized through a departmental committee on scholastic standing coupled with computerized assistance. Since 1967, the

University of Akron has employed the Academic Management System (ARMS). This system essentially traces student enrollment from one fall semester to the next, and the enrollment of incoming fall semester freshmen through the following four fall terms. The Queens College SEEK program has its own committee on scholastic standing. The program is currently working towards acquiring a computer to buttress its system.

The CUNY Task Force Report, Student Retention and Academic Performance (1984), points out that "ESL is increasingly becoming a major element of the University's academic offerings." FTES (full-time equivalent students) courses constituted 3.7% of all the FTES produced in the University. As stated earlier in this article, an ESL intervention strategy used in a prefreshman summer program, yielded a 21.5% increase in post-test scores. Plans to run ESL pilot projects in future summer programs are indicative of CUNY's commitment to meet the need of its ESL students.

The use of computers to strengthen student proficiency in basic skills is rapidly growing among public schools, at CUNY and at other colleges and universities.

For example, in February 1985, CUNY's Borough of Manhattan Community College sponsored a two-day workshop on the availability and uses of software in writing, reading and mathematics. Currently, Queens is supplementing its own hardware to enhance the availability of basic skills computer services. Though computers cannot and will not take the place of teaching, they do allow students to work at their own pace. Software packages in basic skills have a built-in evaluation system which allows students to correct their mistakes and review material. Both activities will reinforce learning.

For over a decade, career education has evolved as a significant part of the public school curriculum. The career education concept becomes particularly important for entering college students to deal with. If freshmen can be led to understand the marketability of a college education, the dropout rate can be reduced. Some community colleges have successfully utilized the college-and-career education concept and have reduced their attrition rates. Recent research by Gwyned Simpson (1984) on career counseling has shown:

a. The first two years of college are critical points of intervention for facilitating career choice processes and enhancing academic motivation.

b. Clarity of occupational goals is the main motivating factor which ultimately contributes to academic and occupational success, especially for minority students.

c. Feelings of self-confidence and self-esteem are the motivating factors enabling students to persist through any rigorous course of training.

The results of a student evaluation of the Queens SEEK career education course indicate that the students do see a connection between the college experience and preparation for a career (Simpson, 1984). One can assume that when this connection has been made, the students making the connection will persist in college. This hypothesis, however, could be tested in another study.

Nurturing the potential of students is the key to any effort to increase retention. I strongly suggest that strategies like those described in this paper will -- when adequately supplied -- nurture potential and help students attain a successful college experience.

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HOSTOS COMMUNITY COLLEGE: STRATEGIES FOR RETENTION OF ESL STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL

Clara Velasquez
Hostos Community College

Introduction

With the Great Society legislation of the 1960s, a new interpretation was given to United States immigration laws.[1] This new interpretation was of great importance for higher education systems, as it opened the doors of American colleges and universities to students who up to that point had found them closed to their particular learning needs. The era of the immigrant English-as-a-Second Language had arrived.

Previously, university programs served two types of foreign students whose mother tongue was not English: those with high social standing and relative wealth in their home countries and those already resident in the U.S. who wished to improve their English language skills. They lived and functioned in this country usually in communities where they were able to apply what they learned in the ESL classroom and this facilitated their development. Both types of student wanted to obtain U.S. college degrees to enhance their professional status either in their home countries or in the U.S. More importantly, both generally brought with them strong academic skills to enhance their learning of English and facilitate their entrance to and exit from American colleges.

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[1] The 1964 Title IV Act, which provided equal protection under the law to all persons of different national origin residing in the United States, brought forth the Lau decision. This decision mandated "equal benefits" in education for students of different ethnolinguistic backgrounds.

The new ESL student population beginning to stream into our educational system in the late 1960s exhibited dramatically different educational characteristics. Often these students were poor and had left their countries (as had generations before them) in search of a better way of life. Once here, they settled in neighborhoods where English was a foreign language and thus did not have the benefit of immersing themselves in it. They were similar to ESL students coming to the U.S. prior to the 1960s in that they, too, wanted a college education in order to fit into society and obtain better jobs. In educational background, however, these students did not conform to traditional college patterns.

Our universities were thus opened to students who previously had been denied entrance because of lack of some academic skills. Despite efforts devoted to the education of this new type of student, a serious problem of attrition arose. Often, after a short stay at the university, the new ESL students realized that more than the usual time was needed to finish their studies, since economic and family responsibilities also demanded attention.

Hostos as a Model for Limiting Attrition

Hostos Community College, founded in 1970, is the bilingual college in the City University of New York (CUNY) system. In a time when most colleges are facing enrollment difficulties and shortages of students, Hostos' enrollment has grown over the last several years. Its student body is primarily Hispanic, but about 20% of its enrollment consists of students of European, Haitian and Afro-American origin.[2]

Virtually all Hostos students come from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Many also have responsibilities outside of the school environment. Some have families to support; female students often have small children; both males and females generally must earn a living, and finally, most live in deteriorated communities where crime, poor health and poor housing conditions are prevalent. On many occasions, these conditions alone force students to leave school for a semester or two, or even permanently. Moreover, a large percentage of these students begin their college studies with only a high school equivalency diploma (GED).

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[2] Hostos offers the Associate of Arts degree in the liberal arts and sciences as well as degrees in para-professional programs such as: dental hygiene, X-ray technician, nursing and medical lab technology. For the A.A. degree, ESL students may require up to eight semesters, rather than four, to complete the requirements.

Curriculum Restructuring at Hostos: Four Major Areas

The new administration installed in 1978 at Hostos identified four major problem areas and set up committees to study them. These four areas were: 1) the need to recognize the different nature of the student population; 2) the need to strengthen the curriculum to better serve these students; 3) the need to expand the student support system, and 4) the need to do all this without lowering the CUNY academic standards. The overriding concern was that the new strategies -- designed to meet students' specific needs -- would be able to significantly lower the attrition rate.

The administration also realized that to conscientiously address the academic needs of its unusual student body, the language program would have to provide students with strong English and native language skills. It is commonly accepted that if a person knows his native language well, he or she will be able to learn other disciplines more effectively. Besides, at Hostos, good linguistic skills are required for enrollment in the para-professional programs for which the college is noted.

The studies begun at Hostos in 1978 led, in 1980, to efforts to restructure and revise the college language programs. These restructurings fell into two major categories: first, the revision of the ESL language curriculum and second, the adoption of intensive, special language academic programs for higher achievement students capable of accelerating their education.

1. The Revision of the ESL Language Curriculum

ESL students take a basic four-term sequence along with Spanish courses in other academic areas for instruction. The use of Spanish is gradually phased out of their curriculum until after the fourth term. All coursework is then taken in English. For these students, the A.A. degree usually takes 3 1/2 years. The following specific changes in the basic ESL and Spanish programs have been implemented since 1980:

a. The four-course ESL sequence has been revised and rewritten to be more consistent with the regular college English course and the CUNY writing assessment test (WAT). Prior to the restructuring efforts at Hostos, the ESL curriculum dealt mainly with the structural aspects of English. The new ESL syllabi stress writing skills, in order to better prepare students for courses in the various liberal arts disciplines and for the CUNY WAT. (The WAT test is one which every CUNY student must pass in order to proceed to upper division level courses of the senior colleges.)

b. All ESL Reading syllabi were revised to include units on analytical skills needed for the subject matter of other academic courses.

c. The Spanish language arts sequence was reinforced with a new syllabus handling any needed remediation of the native language.

Students with GEDs in particular may need strengthening of their Spanish language skills. Hostos recognizes that not knowing one's native language well usually interferes with the acquisition of a second language. Conversely, knowing one's language well, particularly its grammar, enables learning a second language better and faster. Hence, part of the curriculum restructuring at Hostos took place in the Modern Languages Department.

A remedial Spanish composition course was designed to include a complete review of Spanish grammar. Emphasis is placed on writing in Spanish, including writing essays. Every new Spanish student interested in writing in Spanish and any student who demonstrates weak writing skills must take this remedial course. After completion of the course, students may take a more advanced Spanish writing course.

2. Special Language Academic Programs

At least 40% of the students at Hostos chose Hostos because of their limited English skills and because Hostos offered them the opportunity to learn English at the same time they progressed toward an Associate degree. The learning of English runs parallel to their taking regular college courses in their own language.

Many of these students were academic achievers in their own countries, and had it not been for their lack of English skills, would have been admitted to the most competitive American universities. But at Hostos, CUNY is willing to invest in them. These students naturally learn faster and it is posited that they tend to drop out sooner or with greater frequency than others if they become frustrated with an English sequence of seven to eight semesters. Hostos has designed two special programs for students who have the special capacity to study at an intensive pace. These two programs are the ESL Intensive Program and the ACCESS Program.

A. The ESL Intensive Program

The ESL Intensive Program, in existence since 1981, was designed for students who have shown the capacity for learning a second language quickly and for achieving a high over-all cumulative grade index. To identify these students, letters are sent to ESL teachers in the first basic courses of the regular ESL sequence. Teachers recommend those students in the 90% range who are then interviewed to determine a) if they wish to enter this program; b) can verbalize their ideas in English; c) pass an ESL reading and writing placement test and d) have at least an 80% average in their other courses at Hostos. Students meeting these criteria are accepted into the program the following semester. Consequently, this program allows students to finish their ESL sequence in three semesters instead of four.

The intensive ESL sequence includes eighteen hours per week of intensive grammar, reading and conversation. In addition, students take all other academic courses in English. These courses have been coordinated with the departments offering them, and use the subject matter as the basis for language experiences in the ESL courses.

B. The ACCESS Program

The ACCESS Program has been designed to open the Allied Health Programs to some of the ESL students at Hostos who have demonstrated achievement ability. In the past, entrance to these programs was blocked for the most part to ESL students because of inadequate preparation for the difficult terminology used in the program textbooks. ESL students wishing these programs spent three years preparing for the specialized curriculum, then another 2 1/2 years in the program itself. Thus, most ESL students interested in these programs ended with a liberal arts degree which was not relevant to their career interest or worse, dropped out of the college in frustration. Some who were accepted into the programs failed because of inadequate linguistic preparation for the heavy demands of a science curriculum.

The ACCESS program integrates the learning of English and basic study skills with courses in mathematics and the sciences. Following three semesters of specialized work in these areas, students are placed in the health program of their choice, with, it is expected, a realistic image of what working in the sciences entails.

II. Academic Support Services

Course work alone is not sufficient for ESL students to become functional in English and in a liberal arts field. Prior academic preparation is often inadequate. About 75% of the entering ESL students fall into the elementary level when tested in English. Four skills laboratories at Hostos reinforce the regular ESL program. They are the ESL Writing laboratory, the ESL Audio-Lingual laboratory, the Writing-in-Spanish laboratory and the Bilingual Mathematics laboratory.

A. The ESL Writing Laboratory. Students are referred to this laboratory for additional writing practice based on their instructors assessments of needs. Work in the laboratory is coordinated with the ESL writing curriculum. Tutoring is offered at least three times a week.

B. The ESL Audio-Lingual Laboratory. This laboratory is open to all ESL students who wish to practice English or Spanish for both listening and speaking skills. In addition to English and Spanish tapes, the lab has a variety of psycholology, sociology and culture tapes based on lectures by faculty in both English and Spanish.

C. The Writing-in-Spanish Laboratory. The Spanish unit of the Modern Languages department has a writing lab which coordinates its activities with the Spanish developmental courses. Students with weak writing skills in Spanish can practice the art of essay writing in this laboratory. Students who have made use of this laboratory have been found to perform better in writing English compositions and in the CUNY WAT.

D. The Bilingual Mathematics Laboratory. This lab functions under the aegis of the Mathematics Department. Its main goal is to offer additional practice in mathematics to bilingual students who are weak in mathematic skills and in danger of falling behind in their mathematics courses. Students are able to visit the math lab whenever they have free time. Bilingual tutors are available to help with assigned work, studying for math exams, or with practice and skills reinforcement.

III. Counseling Support Services

A high percentage of ESL students at Hostos today live in impoverished neighborhoods where English may not be the predominant language. They are in daily contact with mental illness, disease, violence and crime. Students with small children may require day care services. Hostos, from its founding, has sought to provide counseling services to alleviate these pressures while addressing more traditional counseling needs of students. Counseling services include: the Hostos Multi-Service Center, Employment Services, a Freshman Orientation Course and the Hostos Drop-In Day Care Center.

A. The Hostos Multi-Service Center. The Multi-Service Center seeks, contacts, refers and utilizes the health services of community agencies equipped to provide social and health services for parents, married couples, children and single students. Students are referred to agencies which provide medical, psychiatric, psychological, legal, housing, counseling, planning and compensation services. The Multi-Service center maintains contact with the administrative personnel of these agencies and these administrators are invited to the school to conduct workshops and discussions with students. It serves as a resource that not only ensures faster services from these agencies, but whenever possible, represents the students when they wish someone to escort them.

B. Employment Services. Many ESL students are not well acquainted with procedures for obtaining employment in the U.S. Even those with marketable skills often may not know where to go, how to act and how to apply for a job. The result is often that they either fail to find work or opt for jobs that do not fully utilize their skills. Hostos has compiled a list of employment agencies, most of them government agencies, where students can be placed to make use of their bilingual skills and other marketable skills. Students may thus become para-nurses, para-social investigators, para-legal workers, and para-law enforcement agents while continuing their studies at Hostos.

C. The Orientation Course for Freshman at Hostos. Designed and run by the Counseling Department, the Orientation Course is required of all Hostos students during their first year. Acquainting new students with college life and study survival skills, the course is offered in Spanish and covers how to read productively, outline, write term papers, take notes and listen effectively.

D. The Drop-In Day Care Center. This center is solely for parents who need a place to leave their children, aged four to seven, in an emergency. An emergency may be when a babysitter is sick, or any situation that might prevent the student from attending classes. A certified early Childhood staff is provided for the center.

IV. The College Discovery Program at Hostos: Services Within A Bilingual Setting

The College Discovery Program (CD) at Hostos not only has a bilingual, but also a multilingual focus. The CD population at Hostos consists of about 85% ESL Spanish-speaking students and about 15% Afro-American, Asian, English-speaking students of Hispanic descent and White American students.

Since the overwhelming majority of CD students are in need of ESL instruction, the services to CD students are unique within the University. These services include:

A. Bilingual Tutoring in Content Areas. Through such tutoring, ESL students learn to work with the sophisticated content of such courses as psychology and anthropology. Here tutors present the specialized vocabulary and concepts within subject areas. These services are offered both in English and in Spanish for students of Spanish origin, and in English only for students of non-Spanish backgrounds. Tutors work closely with content area instructors.

B. Bilingual Counselors for Low-Level ESL Students. This program ensures that ESL students at the bottom level have counselors who are fully bilingual. Nevertheless, a major goal of the college is that students become bilingual as soon as possible, and English is used in the counseling process as long as counselors feel communication is not hindered.

C. Career Placement and Planning Program. The Career Placement and Planning Program at Hostos offers training and career placement for any student who chooses to use its services. The College Discovery Program at Hostos has coordinated efforts with the Career Placement and Planning Center to offer training and placement services and to enhance employable skills. The following activities are provided to meet this goal: 1) special workshops in career planning; 2) sessions to help ESL students identify their marketable bilingual skills, and 3) job placement in work situations where students may use these bilingual skills.

D. College Supportive Services. Finally, all regular Hostos supportive services are open to CD students. These include: reading, writing and mathematics laboratories, and regular tutoring services.

Conclusion

Hostos Community College has restructured and enhanced its bilingual education program, enabling a new type of ESL student to attain Associate degree-level skills. In so doing, it has increased its enrollment and the retention of its students. It has also continued to meet its mission to serve students "American education has traditionally bypassed." By serving and retaining these students, Hostos provides the economy with skilled workers who are also bilingual in an increasingly bilingual society.

MAPES: MINORITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IN ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

Millicent Roth
City College of New York
SEEK

Since the early 1970's the number of minorities in this country: Blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians, earning baccalaureate degrees in engineering has increased three-fold (Landis, 1985). This follows a major initiative by industry, academia, foundations, professional societies, and minority organizations to reduce rates of attrition and eliminate barriers that prevent minority students from successfully completing engineering degrees programs. Such barriers include insufficient pre-college preparation in mathematics and the sciences, absence of self-confidence and motivation, a lack of knowledge about the profession itself and the academic demands it makes on students.

Throughout the country, university-level support programs have been developed which offer comprehensive support services to minority engineering and science students to enhance their academic performance and improve their retention and chances for graduation. At The City College of the City University of New York (CCNY), as is true for the nation as a whole, minority students have the potential for achievement in engineering and sciences, but do not succeed in these areas because a disproportionate number of them enter college with deficient academic backgrounds and a history of unsatisfactory experiences with the world of education.

In response to the problem, the City College SEEK Program, a program for students with special academic and economic needs, developed MAPES: The Minority Assistance Program in Engineering and Science. A highly structured basic skills program for first semester students, MAPES combines instruction in the basic skills and an introduction to the sciences, along with counseling and programs which expose students to the world of engineering, science, and architecture. Students eligible to participate in MAPES are those who need only one semester of remediation in reading and writing and no more than three semesters in mathematics.

The long-range goal of MAPES is to increase retention rates and thereby increase the number of minority students who become engineers, scientists, and architects. Its immediate goals are to reduce the number of semesters that students spend in remedial course work, to introduce the students to the pace and self discipline required by mathematics and related science courses, to encourage students to work together to support one another in their scholastic efforts, and to motivate them to succeed in their pursuit of challenging academic goals.

The MAPES Curriculum

The MAPES curriculum includes courses in reading, study skills and basic writing with an emphasis on the sciences, speech and mathematics. In addition, the curriculum includes a science course specifically designed for the program as a non-mathematical introduction to selected topics in physics. These topics cover four major areas: the role of the model in scientific theory; the use of mathematics as the language of science (here illustrated principally with number and elementary algebra); the power of the basic principles of energy and momentum conservation with some emphasis on their applicability to other sciences such as biology and meteorology; and some illustrations of how science can be used to understand important but mundane activities such as cooking.

An intensive one-week "mini-semester" of combined orientation, instruction, and practicum is provided by the Brookhaven National Laboratory (BNL) of Long Island to MAPES students during the spring recess. The participants are the MAPES students of the preceding fall term. They reside in BNL dormitories for the week. The mini-semester is planned and developed jointly by MAPES faculty and participating BNL personnel. A counselor/tutor -- usually a former MAPES participant who has experienced success as a science, engineering, or architecture student -- accompanies the group to the Laboratory. The mini-semester provides an overview of the various fields of engineering and the sciences, and a first-hand look at these fields in action. Most important, it seeks to give encouragement and motivation to these students. The mini-semester also establishes the foundation for summer jobs at BNL for the more able participants. A one-day trip to BNL is offered each semester to the current MAPES group. This trip is preparation for the mini-semester and provides these freshmen with their first contacts and experiences with practicing engineers, scientists and architects.

Counseling is an essential component of MAPES. The counselor sees students weekly in groups and individually as the need arises. The goals of counseling were developed in response to the need for providing students with the support, skills, encouragement and motivation necessary to succeed and persist in a large, impersonal, commuter institution. These include helping students to develop life styles and schedules consistent with the demands of college, fostering group study and the formation of networks of support among the students, and developing skills in analytic problem solving. In addition, guests who provide a modeling experience are invited to speak with students in group counseling meetings. They include upper classmen and faculty in engineering, the sciences, and architecture, and representatives from industry.

Teamwork of MAPES Instructional and Counseling Staff

The counselor attends MAPES classes so that his or her role is fully merged with the academic goals of the program, and so that the instructional staff can become better sensitized to the special needs of the students. The MAPES instructional and counseling staff meets regularly as a "team" in order to share information and to coordinate as much as possible the content of the courses in the program. These meetings provide the setting for the exchange of ideas, for adjustment of the curriculum to meet the particular needs of the students in the group of that semester, for curriculum enrichment and innovation, and for exchange of information regarding the performance of individual students and the group as a whole. The "team" approach is critical to the success of MAPES.

MAPES Retention Rates High

A study was conducted comparing the retention rates of MAPES students with a comparable group of special admissions (SEEK) students who entered City College in the fall, 1980 semester (Geteles, 1985). The study showed significant differences in retention between the two groups through their fourth year at the college. After one year, 96% of the MAPES students were still enrolled, in contrast to 76% of the comparison group. At the end of two years, the figures were 67% and 33% respectively. At the end of four years, 48% of the MAPES students persisted, compared to 19% of the other group.

There are currently no studies to identify which components of MAPES have been the most effective. However, the impression is that in addition to the gains made possible by exposure to an interdisciplinary approach to skills development, one key element is the fact that MAPES establishes a "second family" for the student (Kopperman, and Roth, 1981). This new family encourages students to meet academic responsibilities, to seek help when it is needed, to participate actively in the classroom, and to use one another in a positive, supportive manner. In other words, MAPES was not designed solely to improve rates of retention. Rather, it was aimed at improving services to students which then leads naturally to improved retention.

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USING A THEORETICAL MODEL TO STUDY STUDENT RETENTION

RICHARD N. FOX
KINGSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Introduction

Each year a new cohort of students is admitted to the SEEK Program with plans to take advantage of the access to higher education it offers. Because these students face considerable barriers to their success, they are provided with an array of services to support them in making the adjustment to college. A disturbing number of these students, however, become college dropouts. Given the magnitude and consequences of the dropout phenomenon, it is clearly a priority area for research that might eventually identify strategies for interventions to ameliorate the problem.

Concern about retention is not limited to the SEEK program nor to CUNY. It is a pressing issue for many institutions nationwide. Therefore, it is not surprising that much has been written about student attrition. However, translation of the generalizations that can be drawn from college attrition research to the specific institutional setting is a formidable task.

There are a number of specific methodological issues that must be dealt with, such as establishing operational definitions of withdrawal versus persistence, theoretical considerations, selecting and measuring variables, and designing and carrying out data collections and analyses. Problems of applying research findings to retention interventions are also not inconsiderable.

It is important to base a longitudinal study of student retention on a theoretical model. Such an approach can provide clear prescriptions for data to be collected, suggest ways in which data should be analyzed, and aid in interpreting the results within the framework of a cohesive explanation of the student disengagement process.

Defining Attrition and Retention

Any definition of retention will be arbitrary. However, one can be reasonably settled upon, as long as the limitations it engenders are recognized. For example, should students who drop out and subsequently return be considered as failures of the system? Probably not, but if the study undertaken is short term, or the recordkeeping or follow-up systems inadequate, many of these eventual returnees will be classified as dropouts.

Transfer to another institution represents a loss to the institution originally attended, but not necessarily to the student involved. Following up non-returning students to determine whether they eventually return or register at another institution is crucial to maintaining the integrity of attrition definitions.

Many studies have traditionally regarded the rate of graduation from college within four years of entry as the primary indicator of success, but that is clearly inadequate in the present case. Graduation in four years is an unrealistic criterion for success, especially if the student has to complete a sequence of remedial courses. Nationally, even without considering remediation, graduation within four years from entry is becoming less and less of a norm (Ramist, 1981).

For the purpose of a longitudinal study that was conducted within a CUNY SEEK Program (Fox, 1985), dropout was operationally defined as the failure of a student entering the program during the fall semester to register at the same college in the fall of the next year (excluding transfers to other schools within CUNY). This is an example of how many such studies have approached the issue.

Clearly, academic dismissals constitute an important proportion of all program withdrawals, and these can be closely examined. Additionally, numerous students drop out without being dismissed. It is not always clear whether these are voluntary or involuntary withdrawals under the particular circumstances. Therefore, a definition of "dropout syndrome" developed by Bean (1985) is being added to enhance understanding of this process.

Bean (1985) defined "dropout syndrome" as a "conscious, openly discussed intention to leave an institution coupled with actual attrition." The use of dropout syndrome as a criterion variable makes moot the question of voluntary versus involuntary attrition. Students who leave without intending to (e.g. for reasons of health, family crisis, etc.) do not represent failures of the student or the college, and can be accurately specified after fact, but not predicted. Students in this category would probably be more likely to return to school than drop out permanently. Therefore in a typical study, two sets of data analyses should be conducted, with the first considering all withdrawals as one group and the second differentiating among academic dismissals, voluntary withdrawals (Bean's "dropout syndrome"), and involuntary withdrawals.

Choosing a Theoretical Model

Despite the very extensive literature on dropout from higher education, much of the research until about a decade ago was atheoretical and descriptive, identifying a considerable number and variety of statistically significant associations among various student and institutional characteristics and attrition, but offering a decidedly unparsimonious explanation of the influences on students' attendance patterns. The resultant data made no real coherent or systematic contribution to knowledge of the attrition process.

A number of theoretical papers in the last decade have developed conceptual models that are both comprehensive and explanatory in nature (Spady, 1970; Tinto, 1975; Bean, 1980, 1982). These models provide valuable guides to attrition researchers confronted with the problems of what data to collect, when to collect it, and what analytical procedures to employ. This has offered conceptual focus to an area of inquiry previously characterized by lack of a coherent and interrelated body of knowledge.

Tinto's Model

Of all the theoretical models developed, Tinto's (1975) schema has precipitated the most extensive body of research. This theory builds on Spady's (1970) work and is based on Durkheim's (1961) propositions related to suicide. Durkheim found that when a person shares values with a group, that person is less likely to commit suicide, and when a person has friendship support, that person is also less likely to commit suicide. Spady (1970) argued by analogy that students could be expected to withdraw from the social milieu of higher education through a process similar to that which occurs in the case of suicide. He translated shared group values into academic integration and friendship support into social integration. Tinto conceived of the attrition/retention process as a series of socio-psychological interactions between the characteristics students bring with them to college and their experiences while enrolled. According to Tinto, students come to college with a variety of family background characteristics, individual attributes, and pre-college schooling experiences. These pre-matriculation characteristics are presumed to lead to varying initial levels of commitment to obtaining a college degree and to the institution being attended. Together with background traits, these initial commitments are hypothesized as influencing how well the student will perform academically, in addition to how well he or she will interact with and subsequently become integrated into, the institution's social and academic systems.

Other things being equal, the greater the individual's level of social and academic integration, the greater his or her subsequent commitment to the institution and to the goal of college graduation. These subsequent commitments, in turn, are seen along with levels of integration as having a positive influence on persistence.

This model has been extended recently by considering an additional construct of intention to leave or stay (Bean, 1982). Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) argued that attitudes and past experiences act through intentions to influence future behaviors. Bean (1983) found that intention had important direct effects on persistence, and that the influence of several other important determinants, such as measures of institutional commitment, were transmitted through intention.

Tinto's model has been operationalized and extensively tested by Pascarella and Terenzini, among others, who obtained results in residential universities that were generally quite consistent with theoretical expectations. Many of these studies are summarized in Terenzini and Pascarella (1980).

Whether patterns of influence found in the validation of Tinto's model at residential institutions would generalize to a non-residential/commuter setting, however, is problematic. A small but growing body of research on persistence/withdrawal behavior in commuter institutions has begun to uncover patterns of influence that are different from those found in residential ones. Pascarella and his colleagues (Pascarella, Duby, Miller, and Rasher, 1983) extended the model to the urban commuter institution, where integrative factors appeared to play less of a role than in residential settings and the importance of student background variables appeared increased. They reasoned that compared with students at residential schools, commuting students spend considerably less time on campus, tend to be less involved in the cultural and intellectual life of the institution, and have fewer opportunities to interact informally with the institution's major agents of socialization (i.e., faculty and peers). This would tend to reduce the influence of the institution and increase the importance of individual backgrounds.

Given the apparent importance of background factors for urban commuter students, it seems particularly important to develop explanations of attrition for underprepared students such as those enrolled in SEEK programs. It is not enough to state that the underprepared appear to be at risk, for if this group is to be well served, more attention will have to be focused on identification of factors influential on attrition within groups of underprepared students. This is particularly applicable to SEEK students, whose eligibility for the program is based upon criteria of economic and educational disadvantage.

In his original paper, Tinto (1975) suggested that future research should examine questions concerning dropout among individuals of different racial and socio-economic background as well as dropout from urban institutions of higher education. When assessing the advantages and limitations of his approach after nearly a decade has passed, Tinto (1982) pointed out that dropout among disadvantaged students still had not been adequately addressed. As demonstrated by numerous studies of educational and occupational achievement, the attainment process of persons with divergent gender, ethnicity, age, and social status background can differ substantially. From the point of theory and method, these differences are such as to require separate analyses of group specific behaviors and therefore separate models of student behavior. To adequately study the problem, one must fine tune the models of dropout to take into account the special problems and processes pertinent to particular groups of students.

Designing a Study

Time frame. The time period involved is a primary design consideration. It has been observed that for many institutions, attrition is mainly a freshman problem. Green (1983) cites that nearly 60% of the students who drop out of a typical college do so during or just after their freshman year. Therefore, many attrition studies have focused on freshmen.

On longitudinal study of attrition, Fox (1985) collected data at or during four major time points or periods. First, entering students completed these questionnaires at the time of their initial registration regarding their background characteristics, goals, commitments and expectations for college.

Second, various process measures such as utilization of tutoring services, and contact with departmental counselors were collected during the course of the academic year, with course grades and remedial progress being compiled at the end of each semester. Third, the students completed questionnaires near the end of the Spring semester reporting on their experiences while enrolled at the college. The fourth time point, which also constituted the major outcome in the study, was the following September. Then, it was possible to assess the persistence or withdrawal of this cohort of students over the course of a complete year. The registration list was compiled and the data analysis differentiated among the characteristics and experiences of persisters versus withdrawers.

As time and the undergraduate careers of entering students progress over future years, it would be desirable to conduct additional follow-up studies of their records of achievement and retention. At various time points over the lifetime of the study, members of the original sample who have dropped out of school (or, perhaps, dropped out and returned) might be compared with their non-dropout peers on the variables for which information is available. Ultimately, it is hoped that a study would follow its original cohort through to graduation, although to be valid for special programs students, this might take 6 years or more.

Selection of Variables

This selection of variables for collection in a longitudinal study is strongly influenced by the theoretical framework. A list of variables that might be collected from the various data sources is given in Table 1. These can be classified as belonging to four groups, using a typology derived from that provided by Bean (1982), whose synthetic model incorporates his own previous ideas as well as the Spady-Tinto-Pascarella model:

1. Background variables - These precede the student's interaction with the organization or provide an

assessment of the organizational environment as the student's college career proceeds. Demographic variables, included in this category, have not been generally useful for predicting attrition (Lenning, 1982), but certain subgroups tend to have larger percentages of attrition and therefore deserve special attention. Separate predictions within such subgroups may be warranted. It might be validly argued that SEEK students as a whole constitute a high risk subgroup, but there may also be further subdivisions that are meaningful, such as students for whom English is not their native language.

Student academic factors, such as high school performance, are important for predicting academic dismissals, and perhaps are influential upon decisions to voluntarily withdraw. These should be investigated, although it is recognized that the restriction of range imposed by SEEK eligibility criteria may limit their predictive effectiveness when applied to this group.

2. Organizational variables - These are indicators of the student's interaction with the organization. They are intended to reflect the respondent's objective experience of the organization (for

example, the amount of informal contact with faculty, or the number and nature of contact with counselors). This set includes the structural variables, that is, variables that can be administratively manipulated. For example, if informal contacts with faculty reduce attrition, these contacts can be explicitly encouraged by the institution.

3. Environmental variables - These are variables over which the the institution has little or no control. They include the opportunity to obtain a job or transfer to another school, family approval of the student's course of study, family responsibilities, the likelihood of marrying, and difficulty of financing school. Whereas most research has concentrated on what could push a student out of an institution, these variables indicate ways in which a student might be pulled from the institution.

4. Outcome and attitudinal variables - These are expected to indicate more subjective evaluations of education, the institution, and goals. They include assessments of the practical value of one's education, the institution's quality, and one's own self-development; the satisfaction and

boredom one feels at school, confidence in being a successful student, adjustment to the institution, certainty of choice in attending the institution, loyalty (the importance of graduating from this institution as opposed to some other), major choice and certainty, and educational goals. Absenteeism as a behavioral reflection of attitudes is also included here. Finally, intent to leave is an attitudinal/outcome variable. It is hypothesized to be the best predictor of dropout (Bean, 1982), and to subsume most of the effects of the attitudinal, organizational, environmental, and background variables in explaining the variance in dropout.

Turning Research Results into Retention Programs

Student persistence/withdrawal behavior is influenced by a variety of institutional practices and aspects of the institutional environment. The study of student attrition forces examination of fundamental educational activities of the institution, such as teaching quality, intellectual development, and student-faculty interaction. Research on student persistence/withdrawal behavior may lead the institution to look critically at the processes by which it educates students, and may inspire changes in educational practices.

A side benefit of a study is that it can accurately determine retention rates that can serve as baselines for monitoring the effects of subsequent institutional or program changes. It might identify the causes of attrition/retention, and the correlates of retention (including who persists and who drops out). By increasing understanding of the withdrawal process, perhaps we can identify those students who will survive only if special support is provided and determine how to specifically tailor the types of support currently offered to more properly meet their needs.

The literature contains many suggestions about things that have worked elsewhere. In the SEEK Program, many of the support services prominently mentioned in the literature are already provided. However, it is always possible to improve the delivery of these services at least a little bit. Most notably, although there is remediation, tutoring, counseling, and the system of academic probation, perhaps an improved early-warning system can be devised to identify and help potential or impending dropouts. Specifically, by employing the construct of intention to withdraw as a predictor of dropout in the theoretical model and resultant data collection design, those students actively considering leaving can be readily identified.

Retention programs have to start somewhere. Through the research impetus, it is hoped that imaginative, well-carried out programs can be generated that will bring retention results.

Table 1

List of Variables That Might Be Collected

BACKGROUND

Sex
Age
Ethnicity
Parental education
High school achievement
Basic Skills Placement scores
Number and type of high school academic units
Employment plans while enrolled
Intended major
Major and career plan certainty
Degree aspiration
Termination/completion plans
Familial aspirations for college
Utility to college education
Ability to communicate in English
Academic self-confidence
Perceived preparation
Commitment to goal of college graduation
Commitment to the college being attended
Concern about financing education
Expressed need for counseling

ORGANIZATIONAL

Informal contact with faculty
Tutoring utilization
Counseling utilization
Attendance/absenteeism
Academic probation
Grades/course performance
Peer group interaction
Study habits

ENVIRONMENTAL

Family responsibilities
Difficulty of financing school
Likelihood of marrying
Opportunity to transfer

OUTCOME AND ATTITUDINAL

Satisfaction
Social integration/peer group relations
Perceived faculty concern for students and teaching
Commitment to college and graduation

Extracurricular involvement
Congruence between expectation and reality
Academic integration
Institutional fit
Intent to withdraw
Academic dismissal
Persistence/withdrawal

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A COLLABORATIVE CONTEXT FOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Norma Tan
Baruch College
SEEK

Introduction

Evaluation research has as one of its goals the improvement of program policies and practices. In this paper, I propose that research which takes place in the context of an established program and which is sensitive to the perspective of program practitioners (teachers, tutors, counselors, administrators) has the potential to explain processes associated with program effectiveness, and thus can add meaningful dimension to evaluation. This concept implies a long-term and broad-based commitment to program development and specific forms of informational and technical support to program staff. Staff contribute directly to a shared informational database, which they also use to make program decisions and conduct analytical research. This collaborative relationship between research and educational practice can encourage more active inquiry, experimentation, and assessment by program practitioners. It can also provide the basis for substantive discussion with institutional policymakers and program planners.

Background

To assess a program's effectiveness, we usually ask whether students showed improvement -- tried harder, learned more, studied better -- as a result of having participated in the program. In so doing, we focus much of our attention on finding appropriate ways to measure relevant outcomes and determining whether such outcomes are attributable to students' experience in the program. Evaluations which place primary emphasis on the measurement of students outcomes often produce findings whose implications are unclear. Even when there is good reason to believe that the results of a study accurately reflect the program's impact, users of the information will still want to know _why_ particular outcomes were observed, and how the program might be modified to increase its effectiveness.

To deal with these concerns, we need to shift some attention away from the measurement of program outcomes and toward a more careful analysis of the circumstances and conditions under which learning occurs. Rather than just looking at the program as a whole, we should also be engaged in a detailed examination of the variety of approaches and techniques used by the program practitioners -- how they are implemented and how they relate to student learning. Such an investigation should give us insight into the processes that produce positive changes in students, and the reasons for these changes. Then we may better specify the properties of the program environment as well as interactions in that environment that can be linked to successful student outcomes.

Research which looks in greater detail at the learning process in the program context can also provide critical information with which to adjust and refine our intervention strategies. In so doing, it can guide and encourage positive change within a program, particularly when such research is treated as an integral part of program practice and development. Question pertaining to educational treatment and the methods relied on to evaluate it can then be more squarely addressed. For example, what skills are being taught in the program? Are these the skills that students are learning? What is the relationship between the curriculum and the tests? Is the program making maximum use of effective teaching strategies and styles? Does counseling have a direct impact on learning, and if so, how? Do the organizational characteristics of the program support its goals? Questions such as these are important in a discussion of program impact since they aim to identify the factors which contribute to learning.

Research On Teaching Practice

Research on teaching and learning has placed increasingly greater emphasis on understanding the situational context in which they occur. Along with this has evolved a much greater appreciation among researchers for the inherent complexity of the teaching task. Researchers have become more sensitive to the practitioner's active role in planning, guiding, and revising instructional strategies and techniques as necessary, using knowledge of the characteristics and needs of students and the opportunities afforded in specific instructional environments. From this perspective, teaching involves the application of practical judgment and reasoning to decision-making, taking into account the demands of complex situational factors (Shavelson and Stern, 1981; Borko and Shavelson, 1983).

Process-oriented research within the program context has great potential in informing and involving program practitioners. The practitioner is the one who empirically observes, tests, and reassesses approaches to situations that arise in working with students. Practitioners discover and use knowledge in the course of day-by-day activities and seek reliable information to improve practice. They need more direct support in such activities through usable information, and opportunities to translate insights and problem-solving methods into measurable outcomes. These practitioners are most likely to benefit when they are integrally involved -- when they can formulate questions and use systematic data to develop knowledge they perceive relevant to practical educational concern.

This integration of a research orientation into program practice stands in sharp contrast to the past lack of interchange between educational research and practice (Travers, 1983; Ryan and Anderson, 1984). Obstacles to interchange arise from basic differences between social scientists and practitioners in their attitudes and orientation toward educational problems, and with inherent limitations involved in applying theoretical formulations to real-world situations. Educational research, which stems from the social science tradition, strives to explain social and behavioral processes in terms of generalizable principles. Practitioners, on the other hand, draw heavily on knowledge gained through problem-solving and decision-making experience in specific situations, and must constantly commit to solutions despite ambiguities and inconsistencies in the environment (Bolster, 1985; Buchman, 1985; Lampert, 1985).

Process-oriented research as an integral part of program evaluation and development recognizes a complementary relationship between analytic inquiry and the search for practical educational solutions. Lindbloom and Cohen (1979) envision research in a more cooperative relationship with other sources of knowledge, and suggest that research play a more direct role in developing "critical or pivotal interventions in social problem-solving." By their view, analytic research complements practice, and should be considered an ingredient in the problem-solving process, one which might include "analysis directed to the evaluation, design, or restructuring of the interactive process itself".

Buchman (1984) believes that teaching can benefit from research not so much in the applicability of "stated facts" as in the assumption of a scientific attitude toward practical knowledge and decisions, in her words, "the scientific ethos and process in inquiry".[1]

The SEEK Information System at Baruch College

Institutional commitment to improving educational practice determines in large measure whether practitioners will use research to enhance their knowledge and expand their repertoire of strategies. Practitioners need to function in an environment where they are encouraged to observe and evaluate their own practices on an ongoing basis and to maintain a working dialogue to promote program improvement. Furthermore, the tools for systematic observation and experimental analysis must be readily available.

Few educational programs provide this kind of support to practitioners in service settings. Yet specialized programs in higher education may present some of the best opportunities for institutional development through research/practitioner collaboration (Adelman and Alexander, 1982).

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[1] Buchman argues that to view scientific knowledge for its utility is inappropriate since it trivializes the meaning and value of scientific endeavor. Further, it denies the intrinsic validity of purposes in teaching, which she describes as "the striving for wisdom in practical decisions".

During the past year, the Department of Compensatory Programs/SEEK at Baruch College has taken initial steps toward establishing a local student information system. The staff needs accurate and timely information on students in order to target and coordinate their efforts and to conduct substantive research. They can benefit from better information and feedback for ongoing inquiry and experimentation.

The system involves the centralization of all SEEK student records so that the information can be shared among program staff in all areas of program activity -- administration, counseling, instruction, and tutoring. The information collected for each student includes personal characteristics and home background, high school preparation, college program, skills test history, counseling and tutoring contracts, and academic load and progress by semester. This information is maintained manually, and also entered onto a computerized database.

Features of the Baruch SEEK Database

The use of computerized database systems to improve service delivery and facilitate research is becoming more widespread. The database system at Baruch has capabilities which make it particularly well-suited for management and research uses. It can maintain an extensive amount of information on a large number of students, and has control features which permit a small, nontechnical staff to manage this information with sufficient ease. Individual records can be directly added, updated, reorganized and extracted; tailored listings and summary reports can be produced; and database elements can be selectively joined with additional data elements residing on separate files.

Major advantages of maintaining a database are the comprehensiveness and increased accuracy of information, the speed and ease of reporting and the ability to incorporate new data as necessary for different research problems. Of course, automated data can be instantaneously used for statistical analyses.

Uses of the System for Program Improvement

The system will provide program administrators with better information on how program services are being delivered and enable them to improve program accountability. Are students receiving services appropriate to their needs? Is the distributions of services equitable? Are program operations efficient?

Using this information, teaching, counseling, and tutoring practitioners can better follow individual students' progress over time and at critical points where intervention may be necessary. For example, the database will make it easier to identify students who are at risk of withdrawal, academic failure, or loss of financial aid. Preventive action can then be taken.

The system also serves as a tool by which program staff can experimentally investigate and assess specific practices in instruction, counseling, and tutoring. The system facilitates longitudinal analysis and comparison which take into account students' background characteristics as well as their exposure to specific program treatments.

Some of the advantages of using database information to conduct research have been summarized as follows (Roos, Nicol, Johnson, Roos, 1979):

1. Wide coverage to facilitate generalizability.

2. A large enough N to permit a number of simultaneous controls in data analysis.

3. A long enough time-series of data to allow analysis before and after a particular intervention.

4. The potential for combining files to facilitate the analysis of interventions, the construction of comparison groups, and the generation of histories for individual respondents.

Another advantage of using database records for research lies in the "unobtrusive" nature of the information. By insuring that data collection is comprehensive and routine, common sources of measurement error associated with experimental intervention are minimized -- such as, sampling error and reactive measurement effects (Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, and Sechrest, 1972).

Finally, involving program staff in information gathering and dissemination encourages use of research and evaluation findings for program improvement. (Dawson and D'Amico, 1985; Pauley and Cohen, 1984).

The SEEK Prefreshman Summer Program: A Longitudinal View

One example of how the database has enhanced program evaluation and development is the SEEK Prefreshman Summer Program. The prefreshman program, conducted annually, provides an excellent context within which to assess organizational, pedagogical, and counseling influences, and to do so over time. Each year, the program is modified, using knowledge gained from formal assessment and the experiences of staff and students in previous years. Until now, however, evaluations have been limited to the observation of outcomes occurring during the six-week program period. (Podell, 1983; Tan, 1984; Avellani, 1985).

The establishment of a SEEK student database now makes it possible to follow the later progress of students who participated in the prefreshman program. Indeed, the prefreshman program may have long-term consequences which are not immediately evident from summer achievement data. As some researchers have observed, summer school can play a role in reducing school failure among disadvantaged students in later semesters (Kapsis and Protash, 1983). At Baruch, prefreshman program initiatives are geared not only to improving students' immediate performance, but to providing a foundation for later success in college. The prefreshman summer program may help students by:

a. Increasing the absolute amount of remedial time students receive.

b. Preparing students for the college experience.

c. Providing continuity between high school and college.

d. Promoting the development of effective study habits and attitudes.

e. Reinforcing the motivation of students who have already demonstrated a willingness to participate voluntarily in summer school.

It is likely, then, that the effects of the prefreshman summer program will not be observable until long after students' participation. Using the information now available on the SEEK student database, we are currently comparing the retention rates and academic performance of students who participated in the prefreshman summer program, and those who did not. This process should shed light on whether the program exerts an influence on student persistence and growth in college over time.

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HELPING THE SINGLE PARENT STUDENT PERSIST: THE SINGLE PARENT GROUP AT SEEK/JOHN JAY

Avis D. Hendrickson

John Jay College of Criminal Justice

SEEK

Times are changing. The number of students entering college at the traditional age (eighteen to twenty) is decreasing, and an adult re-entry student population is increasing. A significant number of these adult re-entry students are single parents. Their educational needs are great, but most colleges and universities do not provide adequate services to meet those needs. The lack of services can render single parent students ineffective and nonproductive and often lead to a decision to drop out.

In order to help their own single parent students persist in college, the SEEK Program at John Jay piloted a Single Parents Group in the Fall of 1984. Developed and run by the SEEK Counseling unit, the group attempts to address the more critical problems facing SEEK single parent students and thereby increase their retention rate. What follows is a description of the Single Parent Group, its concerns, structure and activities. Also included is an illustration from one of the group's ongoing exercises in Stress and Time Management.

Two major differences separate single parent students from traditional students: the weight of responsibility of being a parent without a helpmate in raising a child or children, and the unique problems that go with being a student who is re-entering a school environment. Studies have shown that re-entry students have difficulties that express themselves most frequently in two areas, the academic and the personal. In the academic area, they fear their memories have become dulled and their study skills lost through absence from school. In the personal area, they fear they lack skills in managing time, balancing roles, learning to set priorities, reducing stress and anxiety and handling financial problems. These same students, however, also bring with them certain strengths: they have had unique life experiences which are able to provide them with a different perspective on things, and they have strong motivation. They usually have clear reasons for continuing their education and have translated these reasons into action. The John Jay SEEK Single Parent Group operates from the principle that the strengths are more than equal to the difficulties and can be mobilized in ways to help the single parent student persist and succeed in college.

The Single Parent Group meets one day a week for a period of one hour and fifteen minutes. A facilitator/faculty adviser guides the group. The shared group experience offers students a support network, a feeling of belonging and acceptance, a security base and the enhancement of confidence and competence. It also provides a means for managing personal stress, a topic discussed further on in this paper.

The single parent students discuss their common concerns of children, spending family money, feeling guilt for pursuing one's own goals, and dealing with the difficulties of friends and family who may disapprove of their decision to return to school. Discussions also concern housing, babysitting, and personal habits.

Like all SEEK students, the John Jay single parents have their academic deficiencies strengthened through SEEK tutoring and instruction in basic skills.

The Stress and Time Management Exercise. Any new experience or transition involves some degree of stress -- physical, mental or emotional, and can be disruptive or even life-threatening. As mentioned earlier, stress can render students ineffective and nonproductive, and lead to their dropping out. But stress is also a part of life, and the key is helping students identify its causes, resolve them and turn the positive aspects of stress into productivity.

Students in the Single Parent Group are encouraged to use a holistic approach to stress, integrating their spiritual, physical and psychological powers towards handling stress and developing productive activity. By means of a Stress and Time

Management exercise (developed by the facilitator/counselor), they first identify the roles they represent: daughter/son; brother/sister; aunt/uncle; mother/father; friend; student and employee. This exercise of identifying roles also helps them identify and thus focus on the responsibilities they have taken on. The second step includes a list of "Things to Do" (goals to accomplish) in the immediate or future and creates a framework for planning. Finally, the students fill out time charts, an exercise giving a visual account of how they utilize their time. The time chart allows for identifying pockets of time and rearranging activities into a more ideal schedule. Students learn that identifying how much time is spent working on part of a goal gives support in accomplishing both part of and the entire goal. In another time chart activity they plan the use of their time according to responsibilities and objectives.

The following principles form the basics of the Stress and Time Management exercise and are used by the facilitator/counselor of the Single Parent Group to help students identify factors causing stress:

> THE WAY WE ELECT TO SPEND OUR TIME DETERMINES THE QUALITY OF OUR LIVES.

1. Spend time everyday working towards realizing important life goals.
2. Set priorities. Don't confuse "urgent" with "important."

3. Respect your time. People respect your time when you demonstrate that you respect your time. Make it clear whether or not you will receive phone calls all hours of the day. Make it clear whether visitors can visit you at anytime or during certain times at your convenience.

4. GET PROPER AMOUNT OF SLEEP. We need a total of approximately seven to eight hours a day of sleep to be rejuvenated and prepared for the next day. (Preferably a period of at least one hour before midnight to six hours after midnight.)

5. Identify areas for multi-use of time. That is, while at the laundry, get in a walking exercise, or play with child or children.

6. Leave yourself a margin of safety regarding time. Be flexible in case something unexpected needs your attention.

Students are advised that managing time gets better with practice and they should reward themselves for every task they accomplish. They are also encouraged to seek out support groups beyond the Single Parent Group. These can include: family; peers; experts in the educational setting (counselors, financial aid advisors; social workers); members of reference groups (people with whom they share common factors of race, sex, hobbies, career interests, clubs, sports); access providers (people who can provide access to someone or something desirable); and mentors -- people who may be in fields students are interested in or who can provide information, contact and serve to forearm and forewarn students about the future.

Plans are underway to incorporate a career education project into the Single Parent Group activities to further assist in the development and enhancement of the John Jay SEEK single parent students.

SIGNIFICANT OTHERS:
NECESSARY COMPONENTS IN THE ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT OF NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS

Joe Jackson
Herbert H. Lehman College
SEEK

At CUNY as at many other urban colleges, there is great concern about rates of attrition for non-traditional students. The traditional curriculum, methods and support services structures have been criticized as having little value for these students. Yet academic institutions cannot take blame (or credit) for all that happens to students. Indeed, dropouts are not all flunkouts, and non-academic factors contribute significantly to student failure or success in college.

Most college counselors are well aware of the influence of significant others on student persistence and achievement. Labeled the "interpersonal influence" by counselors, significant others represent a network of family, associates and intimate friends. They include parents, teachers, elders, preachers and peers, and provide a socialization process for young people as well as transmitting the needs of the group. In this paper I propose significant others are an untapped source which should be involved in appropriate ways in the college community. Such involvement raises the educational and career aspirations of non-traditional students, and at the same time can be a dynamic and useful supplement to the educational process.

Role Models and Mentors for First-Generation College Students

First-generation college students are common in minority families, and have been throughout CUNY's history. But along with their rich cultural heritage and experience, these pioneers bring a range of problems to college. Their experiences in the urban community and earlier schooling experiences have often negatively influenced their perceptions of what they will be able to achieve. The adapting mechanisms they used for survival in the ghetto are not appropriate in the academic environment. Contact with significant others who have made their own transitions from community to college can help make such transitions easier. Significant others can serve as role models and mentors, sharing experiences of dealing with isolation and alienation, and encouraging students to get involved in more levels of student life.

Significant others can also serve as "alumni role models" for non-traditional students. Because the increase in numbers of members of minority groups on campuses is relatively recent, decades of alumni role models may not exist for non-traditional students. This means that students may not have an opportunity in the college setting to talk with members of minorities working in the various professions. Such opportunities provide students with more realistic concepts regarding careers. Significant others in the various professions can give students not only career information, but also motivation and moral support. They can have a profound influence on the vocational development of students. They can also act as referrals for students seeking admission to schools or scholarship assistance.

The point is that it is important for the student to interact with someone who is successful and sensitive and can empathize. Emotional support influences success and success influences learning. Growth can be social and emotional as well as intellectual.

Parents as Partners Within the Academic Community

Traditionally, parents have been concerned with the quality of education provided for their children, a concern not limited to a specific ethnic group or economic class. Similarly, education has always figured prominently in New York City as part of each generation's aim to improve the quality of life for the next. Parents are determined that their children attain academic goals that might not have been possible for them. Even if they were "turned off" by the educational system when they were students, they have high aspirations for their children. We should help such parents learn how to be better informed and more actively involved in positive ways.

Some parents, particularly those with Headstart Program experience, were trained successfully to help their children make the most effective use of time spent in school. They were taught the value of a cooperative relationship with the academic community and they learned to see themselves as partners involved in influencing the academic development of students. Unfortunately, this relationship diminishes as the student graduates from elementary level. Parents, in turn, often feel alienated. Education beyond the junior high and high school level is of particular importance to the non-traditional population. More attention should be focused on these families as a possible source of influencing persistence and retention of students in pursuit of an education.

The Significant Others Project at the Lehman SEEK Pre-College Institute

For the past two years, the Lehman SEEK program has conducted a Precollege Institute in conjunction with the College Discovery and Development Program high school/college consortium.[1] The Significant Others project has been a part of the

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The College Discovery and Development Program (CDDP) is the high school/college partnership between Special Programs CUNY and the New York City Board of Education. CDDP students who are in the Pre-College Institutes of CDDP attend college classes, receive supplemental instruction in math, science and computer science, language arts, and counseling, including mentoring. They participate in many campus activities and special lectures and

PCI for two years; approximately eighty students have participated in it.

A modified mentoring strategy, the Significant Others project involves college students, college professionals (counselors, faculty and administrators) and professionals from a church group in the community. The professionals from the college and community meet with students to discuss the actual work of their careers and its relevance to their daily lives. They also stress the importance of adequate academic preparation for career attainment and satisfactory career performance. Other professionals who might be a distance from the program write letters to the students explaining the nature and requirements of their careers. By developing the students' interests in career attainment, a very vital support system is being cultivated, another means of providing students with the reinforcement needed to advance socially and academically.

Another valuable feature of the program is that the significant others are of the same ethnic background as most of the students. The mentors can thus serve as positive role models in reinforcing the student's concept of self and what he or she is capable of achieving. The individuals who have participated as

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tours and have use of the college library, (where at Lehman they do most of their high school homework.) While the majority of students in the Lehman SEEK PCI are from Theodore Roosevelt High School, some are from Jane Addams Vocational High School. Other participating CUNY college campuses in the PCI are Borough of Manhattan, Queensborough and Staten Island Community Colleges.

significant others in the project represent a wide range of professions:

a. A female aeronautical engineer in aerospace science
b. A female college nursing professor
c. A female premedical college student
d. A female math college student
e. A male minister
f. A male college science professor
g. A male anesthesiologist
h. A male astronaut

Conclusion

The purpose of the Significant Others project at the Lehman SEEK Precollege Institute is to provide both supplemental and immediate assistance to students who are on the verge of academic failure. While our focus is not to conduct formal research, several areas of positive change among students have been observed:

1. A marked improvement in study habits.
2. Greater participation of students in discussions about careers.
3. More active participation of students overall in the Lehman SEEK Precollege Institute.

4. An outstanding improvement in the Science Regents test scores.
5. A more assertive inquiry and follow-up on the part of students; that is, students appear to be more comfortable in communicating with each other when seeking out needed services and they appear to be more in control of their lives.

At the present time, the PCI at Lehman SEEK continues to refine and expand the concept of significant others. As mentioned above, these inquiries have already begun to suggest innovations and have lent support to the student's academic and social development. When compared with some of the more traditional approaches to student development, the need for including a significant others component in student services seems all the more compelling.

Intervention with significant others is a decisive component in student development and for the retention of students. While students will ultimately realize career and life decisions are theirs, let us work toward providing them with positive influences from as many sources as possible.

THE VANISHING BLACK MALE STUDENT

Flora Miller
John Jay College
SEEK

Some educators have begun to comment on the disproportionately small number of Black male students enrolling in and persisting in college. Although it has been argued that the picture at CUNY is better than it is nationally, there is still a problem. At some branches of CUNY, Black females within SEEK programs outnumber Black males two to one; at CUNY generally, females constitute approximately 64% of the student body. This imbalance is in part a result of the high dropout rate of Black males from the New York City high schools.

What about the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, whose mission is to prepare students for careers in criminal justice and public service?[1] Traditionally, careers such as police officer, fire fighter and correctional and court officer have been male-dominated and the women's movement notwithstanding, are still predominantly male. How can we enable more Black males to successfully prepare for these significant roles in the life of the city?

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[1] In 1984, of a total SEEK John Jay population of 907 students, there were 285 male freshmen and 316 female; 61 male sophomores and 91 female; 37 male juniors and 73 female; and 28 male seniors and 43 female.

The college experience is a difficult one for many students, yet the Black male student, once in college, has added problems. In this paper, I attempt to identify some of the causes of his special problems and to suggest ways, that as educators, we may provide remedies.

An article in the February 1985 issue of Ebony cited data highlighting the problems of the Black male generally. Some points of relevance to us as educators included:

a. Between 1976 and 1984, there was a nine percent increase in the number of Black females graduating from college and a nine percent decrease in the number of Black male graduates. If this trend continues, there will be an additional one million more female than male college graduates by 1992.

b. The fact that Black men are "falling by the wayside" is a problem inherent in the structure of society and has little to do with individual characteristics of Black men.

c. There is a danger of a steady attrition in the number of Black men who can support families, both because of life-threatening situations such as accidents and homicides, and because of

> life-stunting situations such as dropping out of school and going to prison.

Let us look at some of the problems "inherent in the structure of society" that so adversely affect the Black male population.

In most societies, manhood has been defined as the ability of the male to protect and provide for his family. During slavery, the Black male was deprived of this social function. Slavery has ended, but racial problems and social practices still stand as barriers between the Black male and his manhood. Holding onto his manhood is, in fact, a real challenge for the Black male.

This challenge has been portrayed eloquently by Greer and Cobb in Black Rage:

> . . . Whereas the White man regards his manhood as an ordained right, the Black man is engaged in a never-ending battle for its possession. For the Black man, attaining any portion of manhood is an active process. He must penetrate barriers and overcome opposition in order to assume a masculine posture. . . Throughout his life, at each critical point of development, the Black boy is told to hold back, to constrict, to subvert and to camouflage his normal masculinity. Male assertiveness becomes a forbidden fruit. . .

The predicament of the Black male is perpetuated by the American tradition of equating masculinity with aggression, economic wealth and power. Aggression and violence are major social problems of our times, yet such acts are often associated with the young Black male population. What is not understood is that such violence and aggression, where they occur, are reactions to covert racism, violence and poverty. Erich Fromm coined the term "malignant aggression" to describe the pervasive attitude of our culture, pointing out that culture shapes human development. This truth of Fromm's is too often overlooked by educators and sociologists today. When the problem of violence and aggression are addressed, the Black male is frequently the scapegoat.

This "malignant aggression" is also communicated to Black males through their school experience. Early on the Black male is seen by his usually White, female teachers as intellectually inferior and socially retarded. After a while, he begins to see himself in these ways. He learns a certain self-contempt along with the need to develop a style in order to survive. If he learns this lesson, he learns something of the male role in our society as well: masculinity carries overtones of violence. Bracing himself to encounter aggression becomes an important part of his masculinity. Thus the development of self-esteem and racial identity which should have occurred at an early age, does not occur for many Black males. As the Ebony article pointed out, the number of Black children on the social service rolls (juvenile justice, foster care, adoption), is extremely high, and a disproportionate number of these are Black boys.

Studies also show that lower class Black males raised in homes where the father is absent are rated by teachers as more maladjusted than their counterparts raised in homes with the father present (Cartes and Fleming, 1968). These perceptions, true or false (and often they are false), set the stage for negative interaction between student and teacher and contribute to the development of a negative self-image.

In addition, the Black male student, along with most minority students, receives educational services, facilities and programs inferior to those received by non-minority students. Such discrepancies were described in the Coleman Report in 1966 and resulted in a national policy to counter unequal opportunity and access. However, despite reform efforts, minority students in inner city schools in New York City still score lowest nationally on citywide reading and math tests.

As William Ryan (1976) pointed out, the Coleman report did not seriously examine structural problems within our educational system, and how these influence student achievement and success. The impact of teacher attitudes, perceptions, expectations and administrative factors were ignored in the report. This was a serious omission, for these factors, as we have mentioned, influence self-esteem which in turn influences student achievement. While these factors can adversely affect all minority students, it is most often the Black male student who in junior high school is labeled the "problem student", and who drops out in high school.

Implications

The school experience of the Black male student obviously has a direct bearing on what happens to him when he attempts to enter college and the labor market. Basic skills as well as technical training are the tools for success in today's economy. If the role of our educational institutions is to prepare young people to enter the labor market as productive workers, why is the Black male so often denied the opportunity to compete? We see this manifested in the large numbers of Black young men either "hanging out" or standing in the unemployment lines.

Why is the Black male denied the opportunity to learn so that he can compete for jobs? Are we to agree with radical analysts like David Gordon who say that the role of educational institutions is to preserve economic and class divisions? Is then the so-called "failure" of education for minority students not really a failure? For we know the system of tracking in our schools plays a crucial role in the development of students, adversely affecting all poor children, but it especially hurts Black male children. Through tracking, the Black male child becomes aware that his teachers do not expect him to progress beyond a certain point, and his level of achievement accordingly decreases. Beginning school ready and willing to learn, he is often -- despite his best efforts -- branded a failure.

Thus he finally learns, as Knowles and Prewitt (1969) point out, that institutions reward by providing career opportunities for some people and withholding the same opportunities from others. They reward as well by the way social goods and services are distributed and by deciding who receives training and skills, medical care, formal education, political influence, moral support toward self-respect, productive employment, fair treatment under the law, decent housing, boosts to self confidence, and the promise of a secure future for self and children. The Black male discovers he is not on the receiving end of these rewards.

Today he may also discover that as in slavery times when Black men were forced to leave their families, he must disappear in order for his family to receive needed financial support. This practice supports the disintegration of the Black family and gives the young Black male the message that one day he, too, may be useless and cast aside.

Those Black males who graduate from high school have survived, sometimes despite great hardships. Our SEEK students are the survivors. However, we must be aware of the toll that the struggle may have taken. Through no fault of their own, most Black males have learned less than non-minority students. To compensate and to remain sane, they may employ such strategies or defense mechanisms as clowning, charming, jiving, and hustling their way through, or assuming a posture of angry defiance.

Approaches to the Problem

As suggested throughout this paper, survival for Black males in this society has meant adapting to threatening demands in the environment and to pressures imposed by our political and economic system. What can we do to help solve this problem?

As counselors, we are challenged to help students gain the self-esteem needed to deal effectively with unresponsive social and educational systems. As educators, we are called upon to help 1) those individuals who design our educational systems and 2) those who work within them. We must also help them understand how psychological and sociological factors influence educational success.

It is important that we, as advocates for our students, have a theoretical base to help us understand the kinds of problems and pressures confronting our students. It is not enough to rely on psychoanalytic theories because these theories fail to make an important connection between the interplay of ego development and the social realities which influence this development. More useful insights can be derived from 1) the models of reality therapy, 2) ethno-psychology and 3) the work of sociologist and educator, Charles Hampden Turner.

1. Reality Therapy

Developed by William Glasser in the 1960's, reality therapy leads the individual toward dealing successfully with both the tangible and the intangible aspects of the real world, and helps him or her become a more complete person. Its underlying concept is that although there are basic human needs, different groups of people vary remarkably in their abilities to fulfill their needs.

Two key concepts of reality therapy are responsibility and involvement. Responsibility is defined as "the ability to fulfill one's needs and to do so in a way that does not deprive others of the ability to fulfill their needs." We can teach responsibility to students who show irresponsible behavior patterns through demonstrating by our own behavior. We can also show students that, although learning how to study in college is more difficult than learning it in grade school, it is never too late to learn.

Involvement means the counselor is able to establish a caring relationship with the student, one in which the student knows the counselor understands his or her reality and will continue to help until needs are met.

2. Ethno-therapy

The techniques of ethno[illegible]ychology are especially helpful for Black male students. As Wayne, White and Coop indicate, for the Black male student, a blend of historical and cultural forces combine to form his self-concept, i.e. the image he has of how others see him, and the feeling that he develops about his family, environment, abilities, skills, limitations, acceptance, rejection, worth or unworthiness. All of this is learned. There is a strong correlation between self-concept and learning.

Since the historical and cultural background of the Black male student is different from that of mainstream American culture, we need to adhere to a different set of interpretations when we are working at developing self-concept. We must not expect that the Black family structure will fit a White, middle-class stereotype, and we must not focus totally on disintegrative forces having an impact on the Black family. We must also see strengths that can be and are provided within whatever family structure the Black student may have.

The search for self-identity is a difficult task for the Black male in this society. He must learn who he is and what he is like by observing how others react to him. He often gets mixed messages from society. In the 60's, the media portrayed him as Shaft, the "big bad dude." Today he is portrayed as either the super athlete, Michael Jackson or Prince, Super Star. Within the college environment, he is expected to be the refined scholar. In the job market, he sees mostly Whites who talk, act and dress differently from him.

Our students to some extent have overcome this identity crisis. The Black Pride movement of the 60's served to counteract the feeling of self-hate that many Blacks experience. However, they now face a new crisis -- how to be a college student preparing to step out into a world still ready to discriminate against them.

3. Helping Students: the Ten Principles of Charles Hamden Turner

Charles Hamden Turner in *From Poverty to Dignity* offers a useful approach to helping students in their quest for dignity and self-fulfillment. He proposes ten principles that, if accepted, can lead to a positive sense of self. These principles are:

1. *Free Existence*. The right to organize one's life. Presently, our society considers minorities incapable of responding to their own needs.

2. *Perception*. Being able to understand one's own condition without needing to have it interpreted by others.

3. *Identity*. Being aware of an inner continuity and sameness that can build toward strength.

4. Competence. Being able to organize one's own strengths and draw upon the powers of allies or supporters in order to reach one's goals.

5. Commitment. Being able to act with deep conviction. (Our students are often frustrated when results are not gained over a short period of time. They need to learn how-to-stick-to-it.)

6. Risk-taking. Being able to take a chance so that change can come about. Change cannot take place without a transition. The old stops while new meaning shapes a re-ordering of things. New information can alter permanently the way one conceives of one's self.

7. Bridging the Distance. Being able to close the gap between different groups of people. These bridges must be built if we are to form groups to share information and allow ideas to flow between our students and the larger community.

8. Self Confirmation and Transcendence. Becoming fulfilled through the understanding and appreciation of others. Gaining self-control through the help of others.

9. Synergy. Being able to contribute with others toward group efforts. This principle allows integration of different aims and resources to create a new and more balanced structure, first within self, then within the larger community.

10. Feedback. Heightening awareness through listening to the reactions of others.

Can we change oppressive elements within our students' environment? There are models we can utilize. Some are already informally in operation:

1. Community-based help. The Black community is an entity within our culture that influences our students' self-concepts. Our ties with the community should be strengthened. Community life which includes culture and religion can help students develop positive self concepts and heighten their self-esteem.

2. Self-help groups. Many of our students share similar problems. They can learn from each other's approaches to problem-solving. Self-actualization is helped along when we can struggle as a group. The sense of power that at times is experienced in a group transfers to individuals.

3. Mentoring. Counseling approaches in SEEK are sound and effective. However, when we place them up against the problem of the decline in population of Black male students, we see that they do not go far enough. We can add a college and community-based system of mentoring and support. The growing number of Black male professionals can provide role models, and sponsor support and guide students toward careers.
John Gardner indicates that such a career program was set up at the University of South Carolina to help freshmen deal with the reality that the number of college graduates is increasing while the number of jobs is decreasing. If this is a problem for the White, middle class student, imagine what it means for our Black students.

The primary concern of this paper has been the plight of the Black male student. However, many of his problems are to some extent shared by all of our SEEK students. Much of what we do for him should also be done for other students. Our aim should be to one day have no Black male student identify with the plight of the subject in the following poem by Georgia Douglas Johnson:

Old Black Man

They have dreamed as young men dream,
of glory, love and power
They have hoped as youth will hope
Of life's sun-minted hour

They have seen as others saw
Their bubbles burst in air,
And they have learned to live it down
As though they did not care.

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STUDY GROUPS: A COUNSELING STRATEGY TO PROMOTE ACADEMIC SUCCESS

James E. Pope
Ina Richards
York College
SEEK

Today both publicly and privately supported colleges and universities -- especially those in urban locales -- increasingly find themselves with a population of students having poorly developed academic skills. Nearly 50% of all students who enter City University require some form of remedial assistance. At York College, the smallest senior unit of the City University system, a significant percentage of the students experience academic difficulties, reflecting the same problems as the larger population but in greater proportions. More than 50% of all York SEEK students do not demonstrate the required minimal competence on one or more of the three freshman skills assessment tests administered upon acceptance to the college. Because many of the SEEK students exhibit poorly developed skills, they experience early academic difficulties. They lack knowledge of the demands of being a college student and make limited use of support services (tutoring and counseling). Such a situation often leads to early dismissal, and in turn influences the overall retention rate of the SEEK Program.

At the end of the Fall, 1984 semester, 159 York SEEK students were placed on academic probation. Many of them ran the risk of being dismissed at the end of the Spring, 1985 semester if they failed to meet the academic requirements of York College. To combat this problem, study groups were organized and set into motion. Each probationary student was notified during the winter recess by the York SEEK Director and was required to register for one of four study groups. An added incentive to this requirement was the privilege of being allowed to register early to insure that each student was properly advised and registered. During registration the students enrolled in a study group and were given information regarding these groups.

The study groups met once a week for two hours for twelve weeks. These groups were not credit-bearing, but attendance was mandatory. Other counselors were informed on a weekly basis about their students for the purpose of encouraging participation.

Those students who were doing poorly but had not reached probationary status were also invited to attend the study groups. If these students could be reached early enough, they would develop the necessary skills to function successfully as college students, and thus avoid academic failure.

The groups were conducted by two counselors. The aims of the groups were: (1) to examine some of the problems and causes of poor academic performance leading to academic probation; (2)

to develop support systems that might be used as a means of helping these students gain insight into effectively understanding their role as students; (3) to develop coping strategies that might be used to overcome academic difficulties; (4) to develop an ongoing, structured intervention to curtail poor academic performance.

Topics for discussion included note taking, systematic reading, vocabulary building, concentration, recalling learned material, term papers and test taking.[1] Assignments such as keeping scheduled diaries, keeping vocabulary cards and utilizing support services, were given to reinforce information covered during each session. At the initial group session the students were asked to sign a contract. In the contract, they indicated strategies they would employ to improve their learning abilities and grade point averages. Students were given a copy of the contract to serve as a reminder of what they had agreed to do.

During the final session, students were given a questionnaire which attempted to ascertain their perceptions of the group experience. These perceptions were compared with their actual performance at the end of the semester. Although a complete analysis of all the data is not finished, preliminary results indicate that all of the students who filled out the questionnaire felt that the experience had been a positive and helpful one.

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[1] As a framework for developing these topics, the counselors utilized the concepts developed by Walter Pauk. See How To Study In College, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1962.

Those students who were serious, attended the groups regularly and followed through on assignments, were not dismissed at the end of the semester, and were able to register for the spring 1985 semester.

Of the 159 SEEK students placed on probation at the end of the fall, 1984 semester; 76 or 79% of these students registered for the four study groups. These 76 students were representative of the 96 eligible to participate.

The 76 students were expected to attend all twelve sessions. It was felt that it would take the students a minimum of twelve weeks to grasp the concepts necessary for developing adequate coping skills and for practicing some of these skills independent of the group structure.

Discussion and Conclusion

In the beginning, students resisted being in the study groups because they felt insulted and embarrassed. The study groups were seen as an assault on their self-esteem. This problem was finally resolved when the students were allowed to openly discuss their feelings and when they saw that the study groups received support from some of the other counselors. As students overcame their initial resistance to being in such a group, they were able to relax and respond in a much more positive way. It appears the group structure created an atmosphere where students felt free to discuss other concerns and problems affecting their academic performance, including the offering of support and advice to help each other. The feedback during discussions and participation in group assignments indicated positive feelings about being in the group. One of the things that should be noted is that although no college credit was attached to the study group experience, attendance was encouraging.

Information gained from conducting these groups appears to support the assumption that poor academic performance is not due to a lack of intellectual ability, but to a lack of well-developed coping strategies. The information gathered is serving as a guide for us as we in the SEEK program approach the problems of retention. Both the Freshman Seminar and the study group have been revised and each now runs for the entire semester beginning with the fall 1986 semester. It is our hope these courses will be offered for college credit.

STUDENT RETENTION: IMPLICATIONS FOR HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE COUNSELORS

Angela Sales
CUNY Office of Special Programs

The issue of who leaves college, who returns and who never quits is a primary concern of all colleges and universities today. Though debate goes on among administrators, faculty and educational researchers as to how these groups are defined, no one can negate the fact that those who come to college and finish are ideally persisters and those who never return to college are dropouts.[1]

Factors consistently associated with persisters are:

a. Good academic performance in high school
b. High degree-level goals
c. High standardized test scores
d. Good college grades
e. Good study habits

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[1] The Carnegie Commisssion defines persister, stopout and dropout from a traditional perspective: a persister is a student who enters an institution as a freshman and graduates from the same school in four years; a stopout is a student who has to interrupt his or her stay at college and returns in a year or two to continue; a dropout is a student who withdraws for any reason--academic, financial or personal, and does not intend to return.

f. Strong family support
g. High expectations from significant others
h. Identification of career goals
i. Familiarity with college expectations
j. Informal contacts with faculty and student peer groups

The above are from findings in the research of Ramist (1983), Astin (1975) and Bynam and Thompson (1983).[2]

Factors associated with dropouts are, to varying degrees, the opposite of the above. The catch-all phrase for these students is "high risk."

The initiation of the open-door policy by the City University of New York in 1970 welcomed many of these "high risk" students to college. Opportunity programs were designed to meet the needs of those students who were below college admissions requirements. Support services such as remedial and developmental instruction, tutoring and counseling were instituted to facilitate, support and promote those cognitive and affective characteristics associated with persistence. Fewer services were offered to other students admitted under the policy.

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[2] The City University of New York in its report, Student Retention and Academic Achievement (1984), describes persisters as "the combination total of those who remain enrolled plus those who have graduated." Though students transfer to other CUNY schools, persistence is measured by enrollment in the original school.

Since 1970, CUNY's open-door policy has often been criticized as being a "revolving door." (Landward and Hepworth, 1984.) Research on CUNY retention rates reveals that over 75% of the students who entered a CUNY senior college special program in Fall 1978 were not there five years later. (Report of the University Task Force, Technical Report, 1984.)[3] The statistics for community colleges are slightly lower. It should be pointed out, however, that CUNY's attrition rate is not significantly different from other urban colleges and universities. It is predicted that of the more than 15 million students who enter as freshmen in about 3,000 universities and colleges in the United States, about half will persist to graduation and between five and six million will not earn a degree. (Bynum and Thompson, 1983).

Attrition has evidently reached such a monumental proportion that it has become an "urgent administrative necessity" to re-evaluate and re-plan existing services in order to deliver effective support. In this paper I suggest that one of these services is counseling. I hope to show, through the analogy of an athletic persister, how counselors can modify and design strategies to increase persistence -- and thus the retention -- of their high risk students.

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[3] It must, of course, be kept in mind that "attrition" also includes students who may have temporarily "stopped out" -- that is, had to leave involuntarily for reasons such as lack of financial aid, personal and family reasons. Still, the majority of voluntary dropouts -- students who leave school because of lack of motivation and academic skills development -- is alarmingly high.

Counseling's Impact on Retention

The counselor's role is crucial in facilitating and supporting persistence in high risk students. Frank and Kirk (1979) found that counseling services contribute significantly to the persistence of college students. In a longitudinal study of all letters and science freshman at the University of California, Berkeley, students who utilized counseling graduated within four years at a higher rate than those who did not seek counseling. Student profiles were reported to be generally the same in the areas of final grades, high school records, majors, interests and background. Therefore, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that counseling is a determining factor. The logical implication is that if the quality of counseling services is improved, it is quite likely that the retention rate will also improve. Noel (1976) confirms this assumption and indicates that at midwestern state-supported colleges significant reduction in the dropout rate occurred when:

a. There was an ongoing relationship between students and an adviser.

b. The students felt that they were essential parts of a meaningful group.

Throughout the years, Special Program counselors at CUNY have planned, implemented and re-designed counseling services to better meet the needs of students. Today with an average counselor to student ratio of more than 100 to 1, Special Programs counseling units offer an extensive program of support services such as individual counseling with students concerning personal, social, career, and academic problems; freshman orientation classes which meet once a week for one semester (two semesters on some campuses); workshops for probationary students; test-taking skills for students who fail assessment exams; career development workshops and other services as the need arises. Counselors are also required by CUNY guidelines to monitor class attendance and academic progress. This requires developing lines of communication with faculty members who teach the students and others who have contact with them, i.e. tutors, financial aid office staff.

To determine what changes should be made in an already productive unit, it may prove helpful to examine and learn as much as possible about persisters.

Since counselors deal primarily with the affective behavior of students, an indepth examination of characteristics exhibited by persisters outside of the academic setting might provide some insight into the essential elements that promote and reinforce persistence. For this purpose, I offer the analogy of an athletic persister, a distance runner. A persister for this analogy will be: one who meets a challenge and tackles it, and who consciously and intentionally sets a goal and struggles until it is reached.

A Lesson From Distance Runners

Much can be learned about persisters from distance runners. The challenge to most runners is to "FINISH" a previously determined distance in a certain amount of time. Whether the race is over a flat four-mile course or a hilly 26.2 mile one, runners are pitted against time and distance. The commonalities among runners and the race procedures clearly identify elements that could be incorporated in a program geared for persisters. These are:

1. Runners believe in their talents and capabilities, thus, in their potential to perform accordingly. They consider themselves a special breed and they are proud to identify with the group.

2. Every runner knows what the challenge is before the race begins, i.e. how many miles are to be covered, basic notions about the course.

3. Hardly ever does one enter a race without the

experience of running or jogging beforehand.

4. Any runner who has run a race would agree that when it looks like he or she "isn't gonna make it" to the finish, inspiration from another racer often gives the boost that is needed.

5. Every runner knows that there are water stops at different points on the course. Some runners pass them, some stop to drink. Those who stop are coached by race officials and spectators to keep going.

6. As runners tackle the last mile of the race, those who have crossed the finish line run back and describe the rest of the course ("1/2 mile to go," "just around the bend," "one more hill and you're home"). Runners are encouraged to "persist" to the FINISH LINE.

Although these characteristics are most likely familiar to counselors and may already have been incorporated into individual counseling designs, attention is directed to the progression of race events, the degree of preparedness among participants and the inherent motivational factors involved, all of which may give insight into planning student services. The main objective of this analogy is to emphasize the importance of including all of the essential elements in a program geared to understand and encourage persisters.

Implications for Counseling

Reflecting back on the six elements mentioned above, the implications for counseling could be:

1. Students need as much insight into college life as possible before leaving high school. No longer can their survival in college be considered the sole responsibility of college counselors.

Many studies indicate that high school students know very little about the challenges of college before entry. A pre-schooler going to the first grade has more insight into what will happen when he gets to school than the average freshman entering college. Just as parents and others attempt to prepare a child for a smooth adjustment to school, high school counselors should prepare students for college. For students who are first-generation college students, it is extremely important that both high school and college counselors work with them and their parents to enhance their awareness and expectations of college life.

2. Before leaving high school, students should be given an idea of the academic program they will be a part of as freshmen in college. Specifically, counselors need

to encourage students to acquire the basic skills that will make possible their pursuit of their chosen careers.

Losak, et al (1982) in a report on college students in remedial courses expands on this idea:

> We must raise expectations for (opportunity program) students while they are in high school . . .We must persuade them to break poor study habits. . .We must encourage them to seek those basic skills and concepts that will aid in their endeavors. . .It can only be to the benefit of the student, the high school, the college and society in general to insist on the acquisition of those necessary skills that will permit the student at a later time to move effectively into postsecondary education.

3. Students' affective characteristics should be addressed before and after college entry.

Benjamin Bloom (1967) has found a relationship between affective characteristics, (i.e., motivation, attitudes and expectations towards learning, self-image and the ability to persist in the face of frustration), and measures of school achievement. He proposes mechanisms he considers effective for addressing the student's affective domain and for improving academic performance; i.e. attitudinal change will likely improve performance.

4. Prefreshman experiences have a crucial impact on persistence.

Students must get a feel for what college is like first-hand. A prefreshman summer program is an effective means to facilitate the transition from high school to college. Besides basic skills courses, a strong counseling component is essential. Moreover, summer counseling sessions should be consistent with topics dealing with Fall Freshman Orientation Seminars. However, some innovative non-traditional approaches like relaxation, competitive athletics, challenging games, etc., should be used to motivate and prepare students to do college work. Kelly (1984) in his description of an early admissions program for high school students into college suggests that "in programs where students will be interacting regularly as a group, early opportunities for ice breaking and team-building activities are also warranted."

5. Encouragement and assistance from peers foster persistence. Inviting graduates into the classroom to talk with students enhances students motivation. This is not only inspirational, but also reminds students that "they, too, can make it."

A questionnaire was designed to obtain perceptions from 452 students in developmental courses at Miami-Dade Community College of their academic experience in high school. When asked for their recommendations to 10th graders on how best to prepare for college, over one hundred of them recommended that "students keep trying even when it looks like you might not make it." (Losak, Schwartz and Morris 1982).

Strategies for more peer involvement should be considered, i.e., the big sister/big brother notion, peer counseling, and students' pairing or teaming among themselves. An active alumni club is a must. Joining any bona fide college organization is imperative for freshmen.

6. Special attention should be given to students who stopout.

The CUNY Task Force report on retention indicates that Special Programs students are more "vulnerable" to dropping out during the summer than other students are. Although some mechanisms already exist at some Special Programs campuses, more need to be developed to identify potential dropouts. Creative intervention for stopouts should be developed to insure that these students still feel an integral part of the college community, i.e. independent studies options, continuing membership in organizations, etc.

* * * *

It is crucial for high school and college counselors to begin a dialogue on how they can complement each other to better prepare students for the challenges of college life. Greater articulation can occur through the formation of a "partnership" (Shive, 1984). As Shive describes it, a partnership is a planning effort which involves setting mutually agreed upon goals, objectives, and strategies around a common interest. As a forerunner of this type of articulation, Special Programs counseling units should consider a "school-college pairing" partnership with a targeted borough high school where most of the Freshman Class is recruited.[4] To facilitate discussion, collaboration and planning, the following strategies are suggested:

a. Professional development seminars to facilitate the planning and development of high school/college models.

b. Release-time to volunteer counselors for research.

c. Utilization of a team counseling approach for training and experimentation.

The suggestions discussed in this paper are not the "panacea" for all the problems related to retention but they could be significant steps in the right direction. They might also open the door to other alternatives.

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[4] Cuny Special Programs has long sponsored such a partnership. The College Discovery and Development Program (CDDP) is the twenty-one year old consortium between the New York City Board of Education and CUNY Special Programs. CDDP offers its high school students Precollege Institutes and a Math/Science summer program at five CUNY campuses. Counseling and mentoring is offered along with instruction. What is unique is that the high school counselors help to design and develop the Precollege Institute curriculum.

Perhaps it is fitting to conclude with a statement made by Bernard Harleston, President of City College of New York. Dr. Harleston said recently in a lecture given at Howard University:

> It is imperative that we uncover new and valid ways to improve and strengthen the self-concept of our young people so that they feel worthwhile, so that they love and respect themselves, so that they are self-accepting. As we know, a great deal of psychological research tells us that success in school and the commitment to stay in school are highly correlated with good feeling about oneself, with the ability to set realistic expectations, and with a history of success experience. We must believe these findings and bring them to bear in structuring the learning environment for our young people. It is doubtful that quality of performance or incentive motivation will increase to any notable degree in the absence of a fundamental restructuring of the learning environment--cognitive, affective and experiential.

Surely it is imperative that we implement those creative counseling strategies to help students stay in the race to the FINISH.

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NOTE FROM A COLLEGE OF STATEN ISLAND SEEK STUDENT

Catherine Bottaro

I returned to college in 1982 after spending twenty years at home raising my family. I graduated from high school in 1958, but was not able to continue my education since I had to seek employment. (At that time, most girls were not encouraged to go further in school.) When my two children were still quite young, I came down with acute rheumatoid arthritis which at times crippled me severely. There were times I had to use a wheel chair and at times I needed the aid of crutches. In 1977, I had surgery to replace my two arthritic hips with a plastic and stainless steel prothesis. As a result, I have better mobility, a factor helping me in my decision to continue my education.

When I enrolled in the College of Staten Island (CSI) in Fall of 1982, I was frightened and apprehensive. I did not know if I could handle the physical strain as well as the pressure of studies. I did not know what the SEEK Program was or how it could help me. I enrolled in a freshman SEEK orientation class and I must admit it was this class that laid the foundation for my entire time at CSI. I not only found I could do it, but that I could do it very well.

I am a single parent, and I find it difficult juggling my work at home with my work at school. My SEEK counselor, Dr. Bart

Solomon, was instrumental in helping me cope during my first, frightening semester. He laid out all of the opportunities that the SEEK Program and the college had to offer us. I took notes in his orientation class and today still refer back to those notes when I need help.

I am now in my third year in CSI and as of June, 1985, will have accumulated 69 credits and have maintained a G.P.A. of 4.0. Recently I was awarded the Belle Zeller scholarship for the academic year 1985-86. Over 400 students applied and I was one of twelve awarded the scholarship. It is quite an honor and I am very proud to have been chosen.

I write for the college newspaper and also for the poetry magazine, "Serpentine." I am a member of the Disabled Students Organization at CSI and tutor other handicapped students in math, history, psychology, writing and reading skills. I intend to complete my studies towards a Bachelor's degree in History. I would then like to take graduate courses towards a degree in counseling in order to become a vocational and employment counselor for disabled students.

At a large college like the College of Staten Island, students need a home base for support and counseling. Most of the students at CSI have to work and go to school at the same time. This makes studying difficult and I have seen many students give in to the pressure from lack of financial aid. They are finishing out the semester this year, but they will not be back in September.

The SEEK Program acts as a home base to students who might otherwise drop out or be lost in the crowd. It meets the moral, educational and financial needs of its students and does so most of the time with patience and respect. I have found my experience in SEEK to be extremely rewarding. I realize now that I might not have remained in college if I had not had the support of a program like SEEK and of a counselor like Dr. Solomon. The program needs to be expanded to meet the needs of more students.

THE FRUITS OF RETENTION: SEEK GRADUATES SCORE SUCCESSES

Carol Sims
Professional Staff Congress
City University of New York

Brenda Harris, Iris Morales, Henry Arce and Avis Hendrickson have all made it. Dr. Harris is assistant director of the emergency room at St. John's Queens Hospital. Ms. Morales is an attorney for Children's Television Workshop. Mr. Arce heads community relations for the New York City Transit Authority and Ms. Hendrickson is a counselor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

All of them are former SEEK students at the City University.

They entered college with more than the usual number of obstacles between them and their goal of a baccalaureate degree. Like thousands of other SEEK students, by definition they were educationally disadvantaged and would have to master remedial

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coursework to catch up to their peers. While the stipend offered by the program helped to ease economic pressures, it hardly eliminated them. Then, too, there were personal crises that without the program's support might well have forced them to abandon their plans for a degree.

SEEK (Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge) was created by the Legislature in 1966 to provide educationally and economically disadvantaged students with a chance for a college education. It was a response to mounting pressure for CUNY to open its doors to the city's minority students. SEEK and College Discovery, (its community college counterpart), would lay the groundwork for the open admissions policy that was to come four years later.

Conceived as a five-year program, SEEK offers financial aid and supportive academic services, including prefreshman seminars, tutoring, remedial and developmental coursework and counseling. Students are selected from a pool of applicants who would ordinarily not meet academic criteria for admission to senior colleges and whose family income falls within established limits guidelines. Like all CUNY students, results of the University's freshman skills assessment tests determine what remedial work will be required. Upon entering college, they are assigned a counselor with whom they meet once a week during a first-semester orientation course and once a month during the second semester. After that, the counselor is available as needed.

Each SEEK student receives an annual stipend of $595 for books, fees and other education-related expenses. The stipends do not pay tuition. Those funds comes from Pell Grants, TAP awards and other forms of financial aid. Even with this assistance, most students still must work to cover the cost of attending college.

Brenda Harris recalls her days as a SEEK student at Lehman College when the $88 she received every two weeks often meant the difference between having a baby sitter or carfare or not being able to go to class.

Yet SEEK's greatest value, says Dr. Harris, is in providing encouragement, identification and role models. "Counselors geared you to realistic goals and reminded you that, yes, you could do it."

After graduation from Lehman in 1974, she went on to earn her M.D. at the State University of New York at Buffalo. She completed her internship at Harlem Hospital and since last November, has been assistant director of the emergency room at St. John's Queens Hospital.

When Iris Morales graduated from Julia Richman High School in 1965, there was no SEEK program. One of four daughters of immigrant parents who struggled to make their way, she planned to work days in order to attend City College at night. When the chance came to enroll at City under a pilot program that would provide a stipend, making it possible for her to attend full-time during the day, she eagerly accepted the offer. That program proved to be a success and during her junior year became SEEK. Although initially drawn by the financial help SEEK offered, she found the counseling component to be equally important.

The first in her family to attend college, she had no one at home to turn to for advice on her college career or to help explain a bewildering array of new experiences. "Counselors helped me over many rough spots," she recalls.

Following graduation from City in 1976, she taught English, Spanish and Puerto Rican history in high school for several years before deciding to become a lawyer. She was accepted at New York University Law School, attended on a Root Tilden Fellowship and received her J.D. in 1979. Today, an attorney for Children's Television Network, she negotiates contracts, sees to millions of dollars in licensing for products that will use the familiar images of Big Bird, Oscar and other Sesame Street characters, and generally oversees the company's legal affairs.

Like Ms. Morales, Avis Hendrickson was also the first in her family to attend college. She remembers how important counseling was during her undergraduate days at John Jay in helping her to understand how things fit together. Now herself a SEEK counselor at the college, she deals with "anything that may be blocking a student's successful studies, whether it means helping them learn the art of time management or working through a crisis with a parent." The SEEK counselor's most important job, she says, is "providing a frame of reference for students and helping them to take ownership for their lives." Her own days in SEEK give her "an edge" in reaching students, she believes.

Ms. Hendrickson received her B.A. in behavioral sciences from John Jay in 1974. She went on to earn an M.S. in education at Hunter College and recently received her professional diploma in administration and supervision from Bank Street College of Education.

Before joining the John Jay faculty, she was a career education specialist for the New York City Board of Education, a counselor at Kingsborough Community College and a counselor for the Model Cities Scholarship Award Program.

Another insight into what SEEK support can mean came from Henry Arce, a City College alumnus. "I think I would have gone to college somehow, but I'm not sure that I would have been able to survive without the support services SEEK provided," he says. "My head was screwed up in a variety of ways."

There was pressure from his father to leave school and take a job. There was resentment from students (and some faculty) that he had been admitted to City with only a 74 average. At one point he considered dropping out to fight in Vietnam and become what he describes as "another John Wayne." And there was a time when he became so involved in political causes that his grades suffered. In every case, he says, his counselors reminded him of his reason for being there and kept him on the track.

He did leave college briefly in his sophomore year to work full-time after marrying and becoming a parent. When he returned, he balanced full-time study with a job until graduation in 1973. "All told," he says, "SEEK was the best opportunity I ever came across." In gratitude, he has set up a $200 scholarship at City to help other SEEK students.

"The SEEK experience has shown that students who are not prepared academically can succeed in higher education with supportive services," says CUNY Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Special Programs, Leo Corbie. His view is shared by the State Education Department, which said in a report last year that the premise behind the program had been borne out (see November 1983 Clarion). SEEK and its counterparts are indeed working.

Vice Chancellor Corbie does not believe that the program's success can be measured by cost effectiveness as some propose. Instead, he would like to see funding of a longitudinal study that would show where graduates are, what they are doing and whether they make contributions to the city.

"We need that kind of data to tell the real story," he says. "I think it's a good one."

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

LARAINE BENGIS is Coordinator for the College Discovery Program of CUNY Special Programs. She has published in the field of higher education, high school articulation projects and open classrooms. A major research interest is the retention of Special Programs students.

CATHERINE BOTTARO is a history major in the SEEK Program at the College of Staten Island. She was a recent recipient of a Belle Zeller scholarship for outstanding CUNY students. At CSI, she has served as Vice President of the Disabled Students organization, and was elected President of the History Club. She is a member of the Sierra Club, the Committee for a Nuclear-free Staten Island and the Greenbelt Association.

JUDITH BURKE is editor of Linkages. For several years with CDDP she developed tutorial, parents and summer jobs projects. She has taught English on the high school and college levels and in the Upward Bound Program. She was a teacher in the Headstart Program and has directed youth theatre groups in Albany and Boston.

RONALD S. ELLIS is Professor of Secondary, Adult and Business Education at Lehman College. He has also coordinated the Urban Project Summer Math and Science Institute, a project of the College Discovery and Development Program. Dr. Ellis is past Chair of the Science Education section at the New York Academy of Sciences.

RICHARD N. FOX is Director of Institutional Research at Kingsborough Community College. His article in this issue of LINKAGES was written while he was Research Coordinator for the SEEK Program at Hunter College. There he conducted a longitudinal study of SEEK student retention. Dr. Fox is active in the American Educational Research Association.

AVIS HENDRICKSON is a counselor with the SEEK Program at John Jay College. She is a member of the National Association of Black Counselors and the Association of Black Women in Higher Education. She has worked in the alternative programs of the high school division of the New York City Board of Education. A primary research interest is single parent students, both male and female.

JOE JACKSON is Assistant Professor and counselor at Lehman College in the SEEK department. His primary research interests are in retention, articulation projects with high schools and assertiveness training for minorities. Dr. Jackson is a member of the Black Family Life Commission of the Abyssinian Baptist Church and Workers, and the Association of Black Psychologists.

FLORA A. MILLER is Assistant Professor and counselor in the SEEK Program at John Jay College. Her doctoral work was on "Role Expectations and Perceptions of City University SEEK Students." Dr. Miller is a member of: the New York State Division for Youth; the National Association of Social Workers; the National Association of Black Social Workers; the National Association of Black Counselors, and the Association of Black Women in Higher Education. She is Sunday School Superintendent of Grace Reformed Church where she teaches a senior high group.

THOMAS D. MORALES is Director of Educational Programs, Office of Special Admissions, SUNY New Paltz. He has published or presented papers in the development of learning groups, personnel development and supervision and retention programs. In 1982 he was a Fellow for Educational Leadership out of the Bank Street School of Education. He is on the Board of Directors of the Alumni Association, SUNY New Paltz. He is also currently in law school. An alumnus of the College Bound Program, Mr. Morales told Linkages, "I was one of the street-smart kids for whom college was a dream made attainable."

ELEANOR PONTES is University Dean and Deputy to the Chancellor in the Office of Student Affairs and Special Programs. She has had a sixteen-year association with CUNY Special Programs, having served as a reading specialist, coordinator of reading and study skills and Director of the SEEK Program/Chairman of the Department of Academic Skills at Herbert H. Lehman College. Her major research interests are in curriculum development and in the teaching of reading in higher education. Dr. Pontes has taught on the elementary, junior high and college levels in Massachusetts, New York and overseas.

JAMES POPE is Assistant Professor of counseling at the SEEK Department of York College. His research interests include probationary students, causes for their poor performance, and reducing attrition. Dr. Pope is a member of the National Association of Social Workers.

INA RICHARDS is Lecturer and counselor in the SEEK Program at York College. A major research interest is retention and attrition of students on academic probation.

MILLICENT ROTH is Coordinator of the MAPES Program in the SEEK Department at City College. She is also a SEEK counselor. Dr. Roth's doctoral dissertation title is "Immigrant Students in an Urban Commuter College: Persisters and Dropouts."

ANGELA SALES is College Field Coordinator with the Central Office of Special Programs. She is currently a Fellow with the Center for Women in Government in Albany. Ms. Sales is doing research on sex equity and career development in secondary and postsecondary education, as well as coordinating a celebration of past and present Assemblywomen of New York. An ongoing interest of Ms. Sales is single parents. She is also a long-distance runner who has run both national and international races.

CAROL SIMS is Editor of the Clarion, the journal of CUNY's Professional Staff Congress. She was formerly on the instructional staff at Bronx Community College and was Director of Publications and College Relations.

NORMA TAN is Research Director in the Department of Compensatory Programs/SEEK at Baruch College. Her background and publications have been in the area of human learning and cognition and program evaluation. Dr. Tan has evaluated numerous citywide programs for the New York City public schools.

RANDOLF TOBIAS is Associate Professor of Education at Queens College and Director of the SEEK Program. He has presented or published papers on retention strategies for foreign students in both American colleges and universities and abroad. As a former Mellon Fellow, he did research in curriculum and teaching in alternative settings. Dr. Tobias was Divisional Director of Teacher Education at Shaw University and Winston-Salem State University. He is a member of the African Heritage Studies Association and the New York Association of Black Educators.

LINKAGES regrets the inadvertent omission of a biographical note on contributor Dr. Barton Solomon.

DR. BARTON SOLOMON is an Assistant Professor and counselor in the SEEK Program at the College of Staten Island, Sunnyside Campus. He has been with the program since 1969, when it was then the College Discovery Program. Before this position, he was the director of a Headstart Program in New York City, the Adult and Children's Team for Educational Development. He also directed the West Side Community Nursery School. Dr. Solomon's graduate work was in clinical psychology, and a major research interest of his is personal development and human growth, in particular, parenting. He has published articles on experimental education and human development. He is active in his community and is a member of several professional organizations.

CLARA VELASQUEZ is Professor of English at Hostos Community College. She designed and developed the Hostos Transitional English-as-a-Second Language Program and its core curriculum. Dr. Velasquez is currently working on an ESL textbook to teach English through computer language. She has published several books and articles on ESL and Bilingual Education, and has worked as a consultant to many agencies, including the U.S. Office of Education.

ROBERTA VOGEL is Director of the SEEK Program, College of Staten Island. She is a member of several professional and community organizations, including the New York Association of Black Psychologists and the New York Urban League (Staten Island) where she is chairperson of the Board. Dr. Vogel has published or presented papers on the evaluation of special and innovative programs with disadvantaged student and adult populations.

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